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THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 69/NO. 7 FEB. 21, 2005

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Students in Twin Cities build world youth festival in Venezuela

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U.S. rulers campaign for cuts in social wage

In national tour, Bush seeks support for Social Security 'reform'

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

In a tour of five states he began February 3, the day after his State of the Union speech, U.S. president George Bush launched a campaign to win public support for "reforming" Social Security. Bush claims this is necessary to "strengthen" and "save" government-guaranteed retirement pensions from what he alleges would be the program's eventual bankruptcy in about 35 years.

The centerpiece of the president's proposals to solve what the U.S. rulers describe as a looming crisis is creating "personal retirement accounts." Another proposal Bush says is on the table is raising the retirement age.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The private accounts would be introduced gradually and would be aimed at younger workers who would invest a portion of their paychecks in stocks and bonds for an individual pension plan that the "government cannot take away from you," as Bush puts it. At the same time, these workers would see their pension benefits, now guaranteed by the government, cut when they retire. And the character of Social Security as an entitlement for all would be undermined.

These proposals are part of a ruling-class effort to increase the rate of exploitation of the working class. Over the last 25 years, declining profit rates have fueled accelerating competition between imperialist powers over re-division of the world, driving them to press harder against working people. The progress individual employers have made so far in their effort to increase profits through cutting wages, speeding up production, extending working hours, and worsening working conditions falls short of what the capitalists must accomplish. The ruling class needs to slash payouts for Social Security pensions, Medicare and Medicaid, unemployment insurance, and other components of the social wage. They must shift more of the costs of education, public transportation, and other government-funded services onto individuals and their families. This is what the Bush administration is now leading.

AP/Nati Harnik

Protest outside the University of Nebraska in Omaha during Bush's February 4 speech on Social Security "reform." Most such actions at the president's tour stops have been small and have included personal attacks on Bush and patriotic slogans such as "Support our troops, bring them home." Banner in front says "Ask Chile, UK about privatization," referring to Social Security.

So far most Democratic Party leaders have opposed Bush's proposals while promoting the ruling-class notion that Social Security does face a crisis. Liberal politicians and pundits are counterposing few "solutions" of their own, among them the unpopular proposal of increasing payroll taxes.

A number of Republican politicians have also expressed concern that any proposals to cut Social Security benefits—even if only for younger workers—would face stiff resistance.

These reactions reflect the reality that tens of millions in the working class and middle-class layers have come over decades to consider Social Security, Medicare, workers compensation, and other such benefits as rights. Most working people depend on these benefits for survival after retirement, or after an injury or illness that has left them unable to work.

At this point, the odds are not great that the White House will be able to push through Social Security "reform" during the president's second term. The Bush administration, however, has taken the initiative in leading the drive by the billionaire families

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Utah miners win victory in discrimination complaint against bosses

BY KATHERINE BENNETT AND PAT MILLER

PRICE, Utah—A February 1 action taken by the United States Department of Labor registered another victory in the nearly 17-month struggle to win union representation by miners at the Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah. Under the name of U.S. secretary of labor Elaine Chao, along with Co-Op miner Ricardo Chavez, attorneys for the U.S. Department of Labor issued a "Complaint of Discrimination" against C.W. Mining to the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission. This government body judges charges of violations of the Mine Safety and Health Act, and is being asked by the U.S. Department of Labor to rule that Co-Op miner Ricardo Chávez had been discriminated against by the coal bosses when they ordered him to take additional training courses at his own expense upon his return to work in July of last year.

The labor department action is another product of the miners' fight to gain representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), and to win better wages, safety, and dignity at the mine. The fight began in September 2003 when 75 Co-Op miners were locked out for supporting the union. After a nearly 10-month strike the

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Kurds use Iraq vote to press fight for independence

BY SAM MANUEL

In the aftermath of national elections held under U.S. occupation, Iraqi Kurds—an oppressed nation that faced brutal assaults on its rights under the Baathist party government of Saddam Hussein—have continued to press their fight for greater autonomy in northern Iraq. The increased confidence among Kurds to advance their national demands is one of the uncontrolled forces set in motion by the imperialist invasion and occupation.

At the same time, the elections have further highlighted the greater political isolation of the Baathist-led insurgency in Iraq. These forces failed to make good on their promise to disrupt the elections. As a result, some political figures and groups in the Sunni Arab minority that had earlier participated in the call for a boycott of the elections have since begun to take a conciliatory stance toward the newly elected government.

The Kurdish population inhabits a territory that spans across northern Iraq, southern Turkey, and sections of Iran and Syria. The 20 million Kurds that live in the region have been fighting for decades for an independent state. Their struggle has faced brutal repression at the hands of the local capitalist regimes and the imperialist powers that back them.

Based on partial results from 13 of Iraq's 18 provinces, a slate headed by the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the two main Kurdish parties, received 1.1 million votes. This was the second-largest bloc of votes

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Closing gap between imperialist and colonial world at center of Havana literacy conference

BY ARRIN HAWKINS AND CARLOS CORNEJO

HAVANA—The First World Literacy Congress took place here January 31–February 4. It was held in conjunction with an annual international conference of educators, called Pedagogy 2005. The combined gathering drew 5,000 participants from 51 countries, the majority from Latin America, including 1,300 from Venezuela. Explanations of different ways of facing and confronting the abyss between economic and social conditions in the imperialist countries and those in the semicolonial world were at the center of the conference.

Cuban education minister Luis Ignacio Gómez opened the event with a presentation on "Cuba: A Revolution in Education." He began by describing the situation in the world today, in which 860 million people are illiterate—including 40 million in Latin America—and social and economic conditions are worsening for hundreds of millions. Citing Cuban national hero José Martí, Gómez insisted, "No social equality is possible without equality of access to culture."

Gómez explained that Cuba was able to wipe out illiteracy because the Cuban people had carried out a deep-going social revolution. After workers and farmers overthrew a U.S.-backed dictatorship and took political power in 1959, the revolutionary government mobilized 100,000 young people to go into the countryside in 1961 to teach basic reading and writing. The trade unions organized tens of thousands more into the literacy effort. Illiteracy was effectively eliminated in a one-year campaign. In the following years, with continuing educational efforts, a ninth-grade level of schooling for the population as a whole was attained.

Over the past half-decade, Gómez said, a far-reaching campaign has been launched to extend popular access to culture and education through the university level so that the new generations, above all, "understand today's world…and be able to contribute to transforming it." He outlined the wide scope of initiatives that are part of what is known here as the "Battle of Ideas."

These wide-ranging efforts include reducing elementary school class sizes to 20 students, installing solar panels to bring electricity even to the most isolated rural schools, and establishing university-level schools in all 169 municipal districts across the island. Cuba is becoming "a giant university," he said, noting the popularity of programs that pay a salary

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Protests disrupt speech of Brazil's president at World Social Forum

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Speaking January 27 at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was met by protesters angry about his failure to fulfill campaign promises to improve the lives of working people. Although the large majority of the more than 10,000 people at the sports stadium cheered da Silva as they did at a similar event two years earlier, this time dozens interrupted his speech while about 1,000 protested outside chanting "Lula! Come back to reality!" the Associated Press reported.

The Workers Party (PT) government headed by da Silva, commonly referred to as "Lula," won the October 2002 election with 61 percent of the vote—the widest margin ever in Brazilian presidential elections. The PT victory reflected the opposition by workers, farmers, and layers of the middle classes in Brazil to the attacks on social programs and living and working conditions carried out by previous administrations. Brazil had been plagued by double-digit unemployment, ballooning interest rates, and rural conditions where 1 percent of the population of 175 million owns 40 percent of the land.

Da Silva's campaign promises included a "Zero Hunger" program to raise welfare allotments to $25 per month for 50 million people, a doubling of the minimum wage, and the "resettlement" of 400,000 landless peasant families. The new Brazilian president pledged to implement these proposals during his four-year term.

Da Silva has spent his first two years in office carrying out cuts in social programs and pensions, which he has defended as necessary to comply with spending limits mandated by the International Monetary Fund. In 2003 the Workers Party government cut $4.7 billion—one-quarter of proposed spending on public works and other social programs. Da Silva has fought to limit increases in the minimum wage. Cuts in pensions have been a cornerstone of the new administration. And the Zero Hunger program has only begun to address those in need in the big cities.

The Movement of Landless Rural Workers, which supported da Silva in the 2002 election and called for suspending land takeovers after he took office, lifted the moratorium two months later because of the government's failure to act on its promises.

Da Silva responded to the protests at the World Social Forum by demagogically playing on his years in the Brazilian labor movement as a metalworker and union leader, and pointing to the decline in the unemployment rate to below 10 percent for the first time in years. "For now I'm president of this country, but my roots are in social movements, I'm a political militant, and when I finish my time in office, I'm not going to France or the United States to do a postdoctorate degree," he said.

Among those protesting da Silva, who he derided as impatient children, were former members of the PT who oppose the government's capitalist policies. "These people that don't want to listen are sons and daughters of the PT that rebelled," said da Silva. "That's typical of youth, and one day they are going to mature, and we'll be here with open arms to welcome them back."

At sessions of the World Social Forum in the past da Silva had been welcomed by many as a hero. "So many people thought that Lula's election meant change was on its way, but instead we've been disappointed," Francisco Whitaker, a founder of the forum and member of the Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace, a group linked to the Catholic Church, told the *International Herald Tribune*. Referring to the PT's electoral victory, he said, "It's sad, but the big lesson that we learned from these past two years is that it is an illusion to think you can change the world by taking political power."

Following his appearance in Porto Allegre, Brazil's president headed for the World Economic Forum, a meeting of government representatives, taking place in Davos, Switzerland.

Farmers in Ontario protest, demand gov't aid

TORONTO—Hundreds of farmers from across Ontario shut down a section of Highway 401 January 21 between London and Ingersol. The "Stop the Destruction Convoy" protested lack of aid to farmers from the Ontario Liberal government and a series of impending pieces of legislation. The convoy consisted of 232 vehicles, including 95 tractors, and stretched six kilometers (nearly four miles). Tobacco farmers from the region waiting for provincial aid money were prominent in the action, organized by a coalition called Rural Revolution. "If people in your factory were going broke, wouldn't you picket?" tobacco farmer Frank Schonberger told the *London Free Press.* The convoy was scheduled to reach Prescott, Ontario, February 4, where organizers said they intend to shut down the international bridge to the United States. A tractor convoy will join the protest and travel through downtown Toronto on its way to the Ontario-Quebec border February 18. The actions will culminate March 9 in a demonstration at the provincial legislature in Toronto.

—JOHN STEELE

Quebec liquor workers strike nears 3 months

BY BELINDA BURKE

MONTREAL, Quebec—"SAQ management and the Charest government are using our strike to make workers think two or three times before they decide to walk out," said a Quebec Liquor Board (SAQ) striker who requested that his name not be used. He spoke to *Militant* reporters January 22 in front of an SAQ outlet on Beaubièn Street here. The SAQ is owned by the Quebec provincial government.

Some 3,800 workers, members of the Union of Store and Office Workers at SAQ (SEMB), have been on strike since November 19, after more than two years of unsuccessful negotiations for a contract. At a December 8 meeting workers rejected another company offer by 88 percent. And on January 7 several hundred strikers held a lunch-hour demonstration, forming a human chain around the SAQ headquarters here.

More than 68 percent of union members work part-time. The SAQ is proposing that workers be assigned to only one store, instead of a division that includes five or six stores. Workers say this would further reduce the hours for part-time workers. Another important issue in the strike is the growing practice of the SAQ establishing contracts to supply liquor to private agencies. The union says that this is a form of contracting out their work.

Workers remain on the picket line despite many difficulties, including sub-zero temperatures. Dozens of union members also face fines for alleged violations of injunctions that limit the number of pickets at a store to 10. Management has kept 50 of the 400 SAQ stores open during the strike using supervisory personnel. The big business media have waged a campaign aimed at convincing workers their fight to win a decent contract is futile.

The January 14 *La Presse* reported that more than 100 strikers must appear before a judge for allegedly violating the picketing injunction. If the workers are found guilty, they could face fines of up to $5,000 and a maximum sentence of one year in prison.

The SAQ claims to have sold 92 percent of its projections for the busy Christmas–New Year holiday season. The media has used this claim to deride the union's ongoing fight for a contract. "A failed strike" was the title of a December 23 editorial in *La Presse.* A January 20 column in the daily's business section accused union leaders of being amateurs in all aspects of conducting a strike.

On January 16 a meeting of SEMB members approved by 76 percent the union executive's recommendation to join the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN)—one of Quebec's labor federations. "I think the CSN intends to help build more support for our strike, we'll see," striker Josianne Latreille told the *Militant* in front of the SAQ store on Mont Royal near Papineau.

On December 21 the Ontario Liquor Board Employees Union, which represents 4,600 workers at the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO), sent the SEMB a check along with a letter expressing its solidarity. The letter said that in the negotiations with the LCBO that begin in mid January 2005, the Ontario unionists will be fighting for many of the same things as the SAQ workers in Quebec. The National Union of Public and General Workers also issued a statement in support of the SAQ strikers.

Negotiations between SAQ management and the union resumed January 24.

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U.S. troops and Iraqi commandos on joint patrol January 21 in Ramadi, Iraq. About 10,000 U.S. "advisors" have joined Iraqi units to boost morale and accelerate training.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*'s views. These are expressed in editorials.

London Pathfinder Books opens in new location

BY PAUL DAVIES

LONDON—Tony Hunt welcomed participants in the January 29 opening of the new Pathfinder Books in London. The meeting also celebrated the publication of issue no. 13 of the Marxist magazine *New International*, and was a send-off for those headed to Havana to help staff the Pathfinder booth at the annual book fair there. Hunt is the organizer of the steering committee for the construction of the new workers center. He explained that the location would also be the site for the weekly Militant Labour Forum, and serve as the London and national headquarters of the Communist League (CL).

Many of the 50 people who attended the gathering stayed for more than two hours after the meeting ended to enjoy champagne and a spread of food, and to continue political discussion. "There were 55 people—members and supporters of the communist movement, Young Socialists, and others, many from around the world—who participated in the volunteer construction effort over the past three weeks to create something that is needed in today's world," said Hunt. "If we had worked as hard for a boss as we have here, we'd be furious," said Naomi Craine, from the Los Angeles branch of the Socialist Workers Party, who had joined the effort. "But instead we have a feeling of pride and accomplishment."

"Revolutionary literature is distributed from this center to bookshops across Europe, to the Middle East, Africa, and Asia," added Catarina Tirsén, a construction volunteer from the Communist League in Sweden.

Joel Britton, a member of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee, urged everyone to study the cover of *New International* no. 13 featuring the article "Our Politics Start with the World," by Jack Barnes. The back cover carries a composite picture of the earth at night, whose light and dark areas demonstrate the unequal access to electricity "produced and accentuated by capitalism," said Britton. "Our activity must be guided by closing the gap that this image reveals."

"The work done from this center helps break the wall of silence that surrounds the Cuban people," explained Zelmys Dominguez Cortina, the Political Counsellor at the Cuban Embassy in London. "José Martí once explained that 'the ignorant can be dominated.' That is why knowledge is so important—a book is a treasure and we're sure that the light of truth in Pathfinder books will continue fighting against the darkness of ignorance."

In his presentation Britton described the fight by miners at the Co-Op mine in Utah for a trade union. "The Kingstons, the mine owners, are spearheading the rulers' efforts to blunt the resistance of working people," he said. Their lawsuit against the miners, the United Mine Workers of America, the *Militant*, and others "is a desperate attempt to break solidarity with this fight, to divide miners from one another and from their union," he explained.

Militant/Jim Spaul

Tony Hunt speaks January 29 at grand opening of new Pathfinder Books in London.

Speakers from Canada, Iceland, and Sweden described efforts by volunteers to translate Pathfinder titles into other languages. "Workers need to have these books available in their first language," said Tirsén. "We need these books in Swedish if we are to build a leadership that can fight for power." Volunteers aim to have a Swedish-language edition of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics* by Jack Barnes available in 2006.

Xerardo Arias, of the Young Socialists S and CL from Edinburgh, Scotland, reported on efforts to build a delegation of young people to the World Festival of Youth and Students in Venezuela in August. He described land occupations by rural toilers in that country and a recent march by tens of thousands of people through the streets of Caracas to condemn the government of neighboring Colombia for organizing, with backing from the Washington, the kidnapping of a Colombian guerrilla leader on Venezuelan soil. "At this time of deepening class struggle, it is important that an anti-imperialist youth festival is being held," Arias added.

"The labor to build this new center was given freely," said Pat Starkey, a supporter of the CL, "but the materials were not and donations are needed to complete the £5,000 fund drive." By the end of the evening the donations topped that goal.

The final speaker at the meeting was Jonathan Silberman, a member of the Central Committee of the CL in the United Kingdom, who was heading off the following day for the Havana book fair. He described proposals by the British government to permit the house arrest of those it labels "terrorist," even where there has been no charge brought against them. "The target of these attacks is the resistance by working people, that will sharpen as the depression conditions come down," he said.

"The recent 'crusade' to Africa by the Blair government is not about eliminating poverty, as they claim," Silberman said, "but about participating in the division of the world among the imperialists." In Havana, Pathfinder will be presenting a Spanish-language edition of *We Are Heirs of the World Revolution* by Thomas Sankara, the central leader of the Burkina Faso revolution. "This pamphlet does offer a course to eliminate poverty, because it presents a revolutionary perspective," said Silberman. "That is why we distribute these books around the world."

Sole Mississippi abortion clinic under concerted attack

BY JEANNE FITZMAURICE

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—Women's right to choose in Mississippi has become the target of increasing attacks by anti-abortion forces.

An appeal posted last month on the website of the Jackson Women's Health Organization in Jackson, Mississippi, said, "Anti-abortion extremists have vowed to shut down the Jackson Women's Health Organization—the sole provider of abortions in Mississippi. For ten years with the Feminist Majority Foundation's help this clinic has withstood every other challenge, from threats by anti-abortion protesters to punitive restrictions imposed by state lawmakers." The Feminist Majority Foundation has helped organize defense of the clinic from rightist mobilizations as well as fund-raising to stave off legal attacks.

Susan Hill, owner of the clinic, told the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, "No matter how restrictive the state has been, women still go to clinics and go through what the restrictions are. Women still obtain abortions in Mississippi."

But access to abortion in the state has become increasingly difficult. With a population of 3 million, Mississippi has only one abortion provider, down from six in 1996.

The number of abortions recorded each year in Mississippi decreased from 8,184 in 1991 to 3,605 in 2002, the latest year for which the state Department of Health has figures. The abortion rate per thousand women of reproductive age has dropped from more than 13 to 6 in the same period. Some 60 percent of Mississippi women who are seeking to terminate a pregnancy now do so in another state, the Guttmacher Institute reports.

Pat Cartrette, executive director of the anti-abortion group Pro-Life Mississippi, told the *Clarion-Ledger* that anti-abortion protesters are present at the clinic whenever it is open.

In 2004 the state legislature passed six laws restricting women's access to abortion, including one that bans abortions after 13 weeks' pregnancy except in hospitals or ambulatory surgical centers. The Jackson Women's Health Organization clinic secured an injunction allowing it to continue performing abortions up to 16 weeks.

Women seeking an abortion in Mississippi are also required to receive counseling, and then wait 24 hours before terminating a pregnancy. The counseling has to include information on adoption, and on benefits available for prenatal care. Providers are also mandated to tell patients that abortion may increase their risk of breast cancer. The National Cancer Institute's findings, published March 2003, state "abortion is not associated with an increase in breast cancer risk."

The 24-hour waiting period is particularly onerous for rural residents, Betty Thompson, former director of the Jackson clinic, told the Associated Press. The requirement forces some women to take a day off from work and spend the night in Jackson. As for the state-mandated "counseling" of women at the clinics, Thompson said, "They don't hear a word you say—they don't ask questions. They tell us 'we understand this already. We're not stupid.'"

State law has long prohibited the use of state Medicaid funds to cover abortions, even in the case of rape. In 2000 the American Civil Liberties Union filed a suit against the state because a 12-year-old girl had been denied Medicaid funds when she became pregnant after being raped.

Young women's access to abortion is also limited by a law requiring women under the age of 18 to receive the consent of both parents in order to obtain an abortion. The only exception to the law occurs if the young woman has been impregnated by her father, in which case the consent of the mother is required.

Helen Barnes, one of the first practicing Black women obstetricians in Mississippi, told AP that "I do hate that we're going backwards." Barnes ran a clinic in the 1960s in the Mississippi Delta. "If you followed the rules, it (abortion) was acceptable. Now they're trying to make it a crime."

Larry Rodick, the director of the Alabama Planned Parenthood clinic, told AP that some Mississippi women drive across the state line to obtain an abortion, while others are having back-alley abortions. "Some of those women will probably end up getting sick and dying, though we'll never know because they don't put it on the death certificate."

"When a state has no [abortion] providers, women who can afford to will go to another state," said clinic owner Susan Hill. "It will leave a whole class of women to find another means to have an abortion."

Clarion-Ledger/Greg Jenson

Rightist opponents of abortion Roy McMillan (left), of Christian Action Group, and Richard Luckett picket outside Jackson Women's Health Organization in Jackson, Mississippi, in January. McMillan has been arrested 63 times for threatening clinic workers and has signed a statement advocating the killing of abortion providers.

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Wyoming coal bosses achieve record production

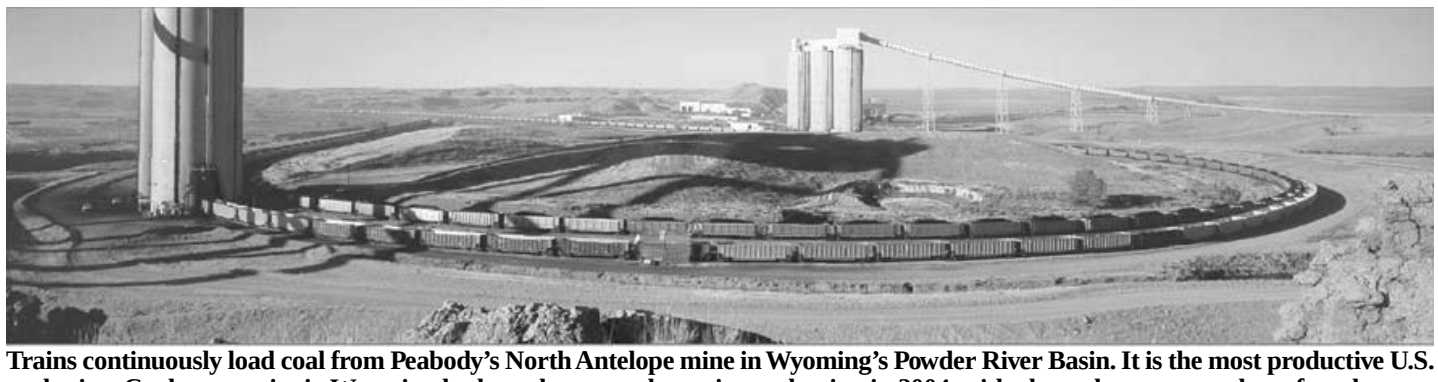
Labor productivity up 2.5% in 4 years in nonunion Powder River Basin mines

BY BOB SAMSON

GILLETTE, Wyoming—Coal miners in the Powder River Basin confront a relentless profit drive by the coal operators. Every year for the past 12 years, miners have been pushed to produce record amounts of coal. The year 2004 was no exception. A record 381.7 million tons of coal were produced at 13 active surface mines in this region—a 5 percent increase from the year before, according to the January 6 edition of Wyoming's *Casper Star Tribune*.

Production increased by 7.8 percent from 2001 to 2004 as a result of a combination of hiring expansion, equipment upgrading, and the intensification of labor. According to a survey conducted by the Gillette *News-Record,* employment increased 5.2 percent in the same period, going from 4,022 workers in to 4,230, which means labor productivity—the average annual amount of coal produced per worker—increased by 2.5 percent.

The *News-Record* said, "Though production at Campbell County area coal mines has continually increased over the last several years, employment figures have remained flat as a result of mergers, sharing employees companywide, transfers within a company, and larger equipment."



Trains continuously load coal from Peabody's North Antelope mine in Wyoming's Powder River Basin. It is the most productive U.S. coal mine. Coal companies in Wyoming had another record year in production in 2004, with about the same number of workers.

Miners in the Powder River Basin produce 35 percent of the nation's coal, almost all going to utility company power plants throughout the country. Wyoming produces about two-and-a-half times more coal than West Virginia, the state with the next highest coal production.

The coal bosses' production drive is fueled by the increased demand and higher prices for coal worldwide. The Powder River Basin of Wyoming and Montana is one of the busiest mining and freight railroad operations in North America. In 2003 Peabody's North Antelope mine shipped 80.1 million tons of coal on 7,220 coal trains—an average of 20 100-car trains per day. Because of the large coal deposits, methane gas, and oil, the region has been dubbed the "energy capital of the nation."

Coal seams run 50 to 100 feet thick and lie close to the surface, making it about one-third as expensive to mine as underground operations elsewhere. While the hotter-burning bituminous coal mined in Appalachia sells for $29–$35 a ton, the plentiful sub-bituminous coal from the Powder River Basin sells for around $6–$8 per ton.

A series of mergers and buyouts in recent years has resulted in the consolidation of mining operations. Arch Coal, Inc. purchased Triton Coal, enabling its Black Thunder mine to merge with the neighboring North Rochelle mine. RAG Coal West sold its Eagle Butte and Belle Ayr mines to Foundation Coal. The massive coal resources in the area are concentrated into the hands of four companies: Arch Coal, Foundation Coal, Kennecott Energy, and Peabody Energy. These companies lease enormous tracts of land from the federal government at rock-bottom prices. At the end of 2004, Peabody's subsidiary, Powder River Coal Co., agreed to pay $299 million for 324.6 million tons of coal on federal land. In all, the Bureau of Land Management in Wyoming has leased more than 1.7 billion tons of coal in 2004 at an average of 76 cents per ton.

So far the coal companies have succeeded in keeping the union out of the mines.

In the 1970s, when the coal companies were just breaking ground in the Powder River Basin, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) organized most miners in other regions of the country.

The UMWA won a representation election at the Belle Ayr mine, the first major

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Union protections for federal employees weakened

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rewards performance, not longevity," Kay Coles James, director of the Office of Personnel Management, told the *Washington Post* January 27. According to government officials, employees covered by the program would no longer receive a regular pay increase. They will receive a raise only by meeting performance standards set by the department. Employees rated "less than fully successful" will not receive pay increases, said a fact sheet on the rules released by the DHS.

A similar plan is being put together at the Department of Defense. According to the *Washington Post,* this plan would apply to more than 700,000 civilian employees of the Pentagon. Together with the new DHS rules, the two sets of measures would affect nearly half of the government's 1.8 million civilian employees.

"The rules overturn 25 years of Civil Service Law, radically reduce the rights of federal employees over important issues, and deprive them of a voice over important issues like the time and place of work," said Gregory O'Duden, general counsel of the National Treasury Employees Union, one of the four plaintiffs.

"They have been after the General Schedule system for a while, and this is just an easy excuse to dismantle it government-wide," said Colleen Kelley, president of the union.

Federal employee unions file lawsuit

The National Treasury Employees Union and three other labor unions have filed a lawsuit in federal court in Washington, D.C., against the new rules.

In addition to relying on the courts to turn this latest attack around, union officials have criticized the new rules using arguments that mirror the patriotic demagogy put forward by the White House to justify the union-weakening measures.

"At a time when we need to focus our resources on protecting the nation's security," the Bush administration is "taking away fundamental rights from the very people entrusted with guarding our borders," said AFL-CIO president John Sweeney.

The White House, however, is precisely using the banner of "fighting terrorism" not only to weaken but potentially to get rid of federal employee unions. The government is also setting a precedent that it can use in the future to impose similar restrictions on unions in private industry under the pretext of a "national security" emergency.

Decline of union membership

This course by the government and union officials, as well as the employers' anti-union offensive, has led to a continuing decline of union membership. According to a report the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) released January 27, the number of union members fell last year to 15.5 million, down 300,000 from 2003. This translates into 12.5 percent of all workers belonging to unions in 2004, down from 12.9 a year earlier. This figure reached 35 percent, its peak, in the 1950s.

The percentage of unionized workers in the private sector last year fell to 7.9 percent from 8.2 percent, the lowest since the early 1900s.

BLS figures show that public employees are the most heavily unionized. Last year, 36.4 percent of government workers belonged to unions. But even that represented a drop from 37.2 percent in 2003.

"The climate for workers who want to organize unions to better their economic situation is increasingly antagonistic," AFL-CIO spokeswoman Sarah Massey told the *New York Times,* "and good jobs are still disappearing."

In 2002 President George Bush issued an executive order denying union representation to more than 500 employees at the U.S. Attorney's office and other divisions of the Justice Department. The White House claimed union contracts could restrict the ability of workers "to protect Americans and national security."

On similar grounds, in January 2003 the head of the government's Transportation Security Administration (TSA) signed an order barring airport screeners from union membership. He said collective bargaining is "not compatible" with "fighting terrorism."

The TSA is a division of the Department of Homeland Security. TSA employees are not included in the new personnel system.

The new restrictions, and their planned extension throughout the federal government, have bipartisan support.

Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, which would have to approve any relevant legislation, has come out in support of the White House rules. "We should see how it works before we consider whether it would be appropriate for agencies without critical national security responsibilities," he said.

FBI expands 'counterterrorism' operations in U.S.

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The FBI is rapidly expanding its domestic "counterterrorist" work, in particular its spying activities in the United States against foreign figures and governments. According to an article in the January 28 *Los Angeles Times,* this function has long been the province of the Central Intelligence Agency. The article is based on interviews with past and present CIA officials who say they see the bureau's new reach into "foreign spying" as a threat to their turf.

This is part of the reorganization of Washington's spying operations at home and abroad as the U.S. rulers drive through a transformation of their military to more effectively fight their "war on terrorism."

In December, the White House beat back an attempt to weaken the Pentagon's control of its "intelligence gathering" operations. Under the "intelligence reform" bill passed in December, Washington's spying operations are being centralized by a cabinet level Director of National Intelligence directly responsible to the president. Exempted from this centralization are the Pentagon's massive spying operations. Around 80 percent of the government budget for spying falls under Defense Department control.

The FBI has begun hiring hundreds of intelligence analysts and other specialists and setting up groups of field offices solely dedicated to spying. Top officials of the agencies, including FBI director Robert Mueller and CIA chief Peter Goss, have been in discussions since December to rewrite the ground rules delineating their turfs regarding spying in the United States and abroad, the *Times* reported.

U.S. president George Bush issued an order in 2003 enabling the FBI to conduct spy operations aimed at foreign targets when requested by "officials of the intelligence community designated by the president," the *Times* said. The order also requires CIA-conducted spy operations on U.S. soil aimed at foreign targets "to be coordinated with the FBI."

Both agencies were sharply criticized for "intelligence failures" during the 9/11 Commission hearings last year. Ultimately, the commission and Congressional hearings backed the government's course for the blossoming spying arm of the FBI to remain and to be allowed to grow, the *Times* said.

A main conclusion of both hearings was the need for freer exchange of information between various government spy agencies. "The nature of the threat requires joint operations," said an unnamed source familiar with the FBI's expansion plans, according to the *Times*. "With the CIA and FBI operating together, more of the foreign intelligence requirements of the United States will be met."

A central component of the transformation of the U.S. military championed by the White House and pushed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld is to develop joint operations capabilities between the branches of the military structured around special operations troops as the leading force.

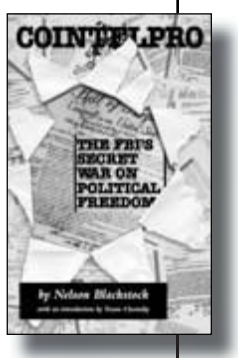
The CIA has been the main agency responsible for U.S. spy operations overseas. It also has domestic stations in most major U.S. cities. CIA agents in these stations glean information from travelers and recruit U.S. citizens or foreign visitors who may have friends or relatives in a position to "provide information on foreign targets," according to the *Times*. The CIA, for example, has been actively recruiting informants from Southern California's large Iranian-American population, seeking spies that could help Washington open more doors for its agents in Iran, the paper said. The FBI is more and more getting into the action around such operations.

These steps are part of clearing the decks of restraints placed on U.S. military and other intelligence operations within the United States following the 1975 Senate Church Committee Report. That report detailed sweeping violations of constitutional rights by the FBI and other government spy agencies carrying out operations against opponents of the Vietnam War, supporters of the civil rights movement, the labor movement, and others.

Further Reading

Cointelpro: The FBI's Secret War on Political Freedom

by Nelson Blackstock



Describes the decades-long covert counterintelligence program—code-named Cointelpro—directed against socialists and activists in the Black and anti–Vietnam War movements. The operations revealed in the documents cited in this book provide an unprecedented look at the methods used by the FBI, CIA, military intelligence, and other U.S. police agencies.

$16.00

FBI on Trial

The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit against Government Spying

$18.95

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Utah miners struggle

Continued from front page

plause. These workers have been fighting since September 2003 for safe working conditions, livable wages, dignity on the job, and respect by the Kingstons, the owners of the Co-Op mine, which is operated by C.W. Mining.

Harlan County director Barbara Kopple, who was in her 20s when she shot the documentary, invited the coal miners to the January 28 screening. "Basically we were too young and too stupid to understand the project we were undertaking," Kopple said after the movie showing, in a roundtable discussion that included film critic Roger Ebert, as well as Kopple's crew. "We went to get some film on a strike and ended up staying 18 months, living with the miners, and doing something worthwhile."

In response to a question from the audience on the objectivity of her documentary, Kopple said, "I don't think film should be neutral. We took the miners' side. The company had enough ways to get out their message."

Brookside miners strike

The film of the 1973–74 strike vividly records the Kentucky UMWA miners confronting armed company goons on the picket lines and covers the central role of the miners' wives in the struggle. One striker was shot in the face by a scab. He died before the company finally gave in to the workers' struggle for the union.

The Brookside coal mine, where the 1973 battle took place, had an accident rate three times the national average, low wages, and minimal medical and retirement benefits. The workers belonged to a company union, the Southern Labor Union—much like the so-called International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU) at the Huntington mine today, which Co-Op miners describe as an outfit created by the bosses to keep out the UMWA or any other real union. Contracts were different from mine to mine with wages ranging from $17 to $32 a day, compared to the $45 per day on average that workers at UMWA-organized mines were receiving.

In June 1973, the Brookside miners voted to be represented by the UMWA, rejecting the company union by a 113-55 margin. The Eastover Mining Company, which operated the mine and was owned by the Duke Power Company, refused to accept the terms of the nationwide UMWA contract in effect at the time. That contract included the right to strike, decent pensions, higher wages, and the right of miners to form an elected safety committee. The Brookside miners walked out June 30, 1973. They won their battle 14 months later, at a time when the UMWA had organized a nationwide walkout to protest unsafe working conditions.

"Our fight at the Co-Op mine hasn't faced the violence the miners in Harlan County did, but it has been a similar struggle," said Juan Salazar, a miner for four years at C.W. Mining, during the discussion. "Just like with the Kentucky miners, the company is denying us the union representation the majority of miners want, and the government agencies are making us wait a long time for decisions about our fight, which gives an advantage to the company."

The miners were asked to have a miner come to the front of the room to speak during the round-table discussion. "Our struggle has received a lot of solidarity, like we have at the events today," Salazar said. "I believe that anyone who has their rights denied, has the right to stand up and fight back, and they will get our support."

'Similar reality for many miners'

Salazar said watching *Harlan County USA* had a profound impact on the nine Co-Op miners who saw the movie. "The story told in the film," he said, "remains a reality for many coal miners today. That is why it's so important."

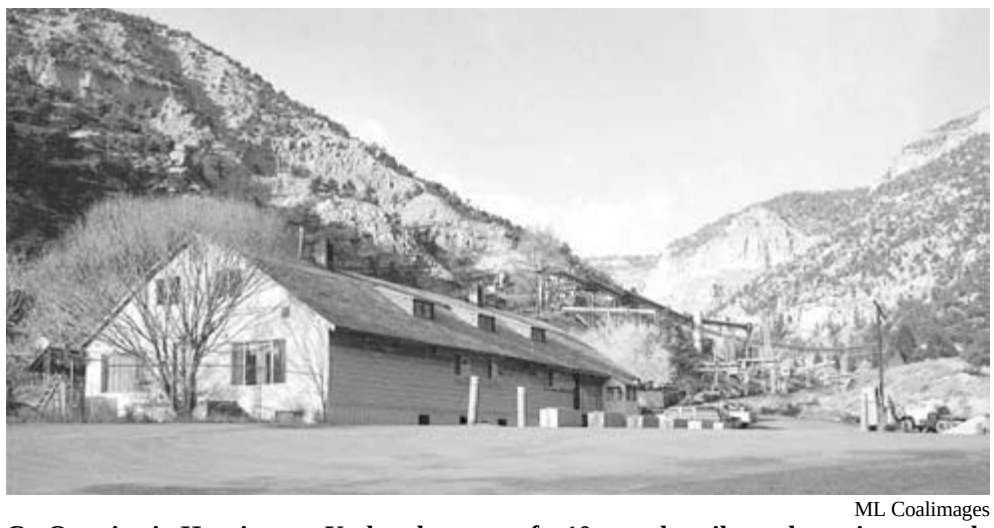
The Co-Op miners appealed for funds during the discussion. They collected $1,350 in donations. Scores of contributions filled a five-gallon bucket, with people kicking in anywhere from $1 to $50, the miners said. The miners had set up a photo display in the lobby of the Egyptian Theater in Park City before the movie showing, along with stacks of newspaper clippings that tell the story of their struggle for a union.

Later that evening, a party hosted by Kopple featured live music by Hazel Dickens. Now 69, Dickens is a miners' wife and sister who wrote and sang several songs for *Harlan County USA*. Plans are underway to re-release the documentary on DVD, Kopple said. The new release is to include special features, such as the January 28 round-table discussion with the Co-Op miners here, and other interviews with the film's producers.

Roger Ebert, the film critic who led the round-table discussion, said he was also struck by the Co-Op miners' conditions and tenacity. "Kopple also shared the stage with Utah miners," Ebert wrote on his website following the film festival. "Although the national average pay for coal miners is $15 to $16 an hour, these workers—who are striking for a union contract—are paid $7 an hour for the backbreaking and dangerous work.

"Using a translator, the Spanish-speaking miners told their story. One detail struck me with curious strength. A miner complained that his foreman demanded he give him a bottle of Gatorade every day as sort of a job tax. It is the small scale of the bribe that hit me."

The Co-Op miners said they have yet to hear from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), six weeks after voting in a union representation election, about the outcome of the vote. The labor board is supposed to rule on whether ballots submitted by about 100 Kingston-family members will be counted, and whether it will count the votes of about 35 foreign-born workers fired by C.W. Mining one week before the union election. UMWA supporters who worked at Co-Op say they are confident most production workers at the mine voted for the union.



ML Coalimages

Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah—the scene of a 10-month strike and ongoing struggle by coal miners there to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America.

Region 27 of the NLRB, the board's regional office based in Denver, ruled November 18 that none of the Kingston family members and relatives would be allowed to vote because their close ties to the company owner represented a conflict of interest. The bosses then appealed the decision to the national NLRB. On December 9, C.W. Mining dismissed most of its foreign-born workers on the pretext they lacked proper work documents. The miners say the real reason for the mass firings, one week before the December 17 union election, was their efforts to win UMWA representation. The dismissed workers point out that the company had the same employment documents for each one of them in its files for years and it had never become an issue until the showdown around their union-organizing struggle.

Kingstons' harassment lawsuit

Co-Op miners and the UMWA are also taking steps to counter what they describe as a harassment lawsuit filed by C.W. Mining and the IAUWU. In the last week of January, individual miners who are named in the lawsuit signed up for representation by UMWA attorneys. The UMWA has offered to defend all of the miners named in the suit.

The UMWA and 17 individual Co-Op miners are charged with unfair labor practices because of the way they organized their fight for unionization. The lawsuit also claims supporters of the miners are guilty of "defamation" in citing the poor work conditions and low pay at the Co-Op mine and offering solidarity to the miners' fight. UMWA representatives have said the suit is frivolous and will ask the court to dismiss it.

Attorneys for the *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret Morning News*—Utah's two largest dailies—and the *Militant* newspaper, which are also cited for "defamation," are each preparing their own response to the lawsuit. The *Militant* has said that, like the UMWA, it will try to get the suit dismissed in its early stages.

Letters to NLRB, funds needed

Co-Op miners said they continue to urge supporters of their fight to send letters to the NLRB demanding the fired miners be reinstated and the votes of Kingston family members in the union representation election be thrown out based on the November 18 ruling by Region 27 of the labor board.

Protest letters should be sent to the NLRB, Robert J. Battista, Chairman, 1099 14th St. N.W. Washington, D.C. 20570-0001; with copies to B. Allan Benson, director of NLRB Region 27, 600 17th St. 7th Floor—North Tower, Denver, CO 80202-5433; Tel: (303) 844-3551; Fax: (303) 844-6249.

Copies of letters to the NLRB, along with other messages of solidarity and financial contributions, should also be sent to UMWA District 22, 525 East 100 South, Price, UT 84501.

Funds also are urgently needed to help support about 20 Co-Op miners and their families who have not been able to find work since being fired by C.W. Mining, Salazar and other miners said. Checks should be made out to "Co-Op Miners Fund" and sent to the UMWA District office listed above.

L.A. teachers back Utah miners union fight

The following is reprinted from the January 14 issue of *United Teacher*, a publication of the United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA). It was published under the headline "Utah miners in tough fight to unionize; Effort is just one of many nationwide to secure the right to belong to a union." The author is the UTLA treasurer. Reprinted by permission.

BY ALBERTO VALDIVIA

Since September 2003, coal miners have been trying to organize the Co-op mine in Price, Utah. The fight to organize the mine has been momentous, with firings, lockouts, threats of deportation, suits against the miners, and other deplorable actions.

Here's the back story: C.W. Mining owns the Co-op mine, where workers make from $5.75 to $7 per hour, while the average mining wage in Utah is about $21. In September 2003 the Co-op miners attempted to affiliate with the United Mineworkers of America, and C.W. Mining reacted by locking them out. In September 2004 the National Labor Relations Board stepped in and brokered a deal in which C.W. Mining would not admit to any wrongdoing, and an election for representation between the United Mine Workers of America and the company union, the International Association of United Workers, would take place. Of the ten mines operating in Utah, only two are organized by the UMWA. On the eve of the election in December, the company fired 30 miners, leaving only 39 miners eligible to vote in the election.

The struggle of the Co-op miners for union representation by the UMWA has received positive widespread coverage in the media. As a result, C.W. Mining has initiated a mind-boggling mass suit against media outlets and organizations for publicizing the organizing efforts of the miners. Included in the suit are the United Mine Workers, the *Salt Lake Tribune*, and the *Deseret Morning* News, among others. Among those dropped from the original suit are the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake, Catholic Bishop of Salt Lake George Niederauer, the *Price Sun Advocate*, the *Emery County Register*, and the National Organization for Women.

The fight of the Co-op miners is a struggle for what all employees want: decent pay, a safe work environment, sick days, health benefits, the right to be treated with dignity while on the job, and the right to be paid a fair wage for a day's work. In spite of severe economic and emotional deprivation, the Co-op miners have stuck together and supported each other, while reaching out to anyone who would listen to them and help publicize their organizing drive.

This struggle is just one among many going on throughout the United States. The right to belong to a union should be a basic right of all workers. Presently, approximately 13 percent of the U.S. workforce is organized (that number jumps to 16 percent in Los Angeles County). With nonunion workers losing health benefits, pension plans, seniority on the job, and other workplace rights, the positive role that unions play is obvious.

Without unions, the fight of U.S. workers for a decent work environment and fair pay would be much harder. Hopefully these efforts to organize unions at the workplace will increase as employees in the U.S. continue to face stagnant wages, decreased benefits, and low morale at their work sites.

When others support union organizing drives, it helps all workers at their jobs. The stronger and more united the union movement is, the stronger and more united the workplace will be.

Support the miners: *Because of the harassment, lack of work, and threats against deportation that the Co-op miners have faced, they are in desperate need of funds to continue their organizing campaign and to make this organizing drive a success. Please help these brothers and sisters of the labor movement attain their goal of affiliation with the UMWA. If you would like to make an individual donation to the Co-op Miners UMW organizing drive, please send it to: Alberto Valdivia, Treasurer, UTLA, 3303 Wilshire Blvd 10th FL, L.A., CA 90010. Please make your checks out to UTLA/Co-op miners.*

Wyoming coal production

Continued from Page 4

mine in the area, shortly after it opened in 1972. But in 1975, the coal bosses broke the union after a bitter several-months-long strike, using company goons and strikebreakers.

Keeping the mines nonunion has been a key element in the coal companies' strategy to boost profits. Today, the 10 largest mines in the country are all in the Powder River Basin.

The nearest UMWA mine in the area, the Decker mine, is in southeastern Montana, just north of Sheridan, Wyoming. Miners at the Decker and Big Horn mines waged a four-year-long strike in the late 1980s against the union-busting attempts of Kiewit Mining Group. The company used scabs, hired three private security firms to harass the strikers, and offered a $250,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of individuals for "strike-related" acts. Despite their campaign, the bosses were unable to defeat the UMWA.

The mine bosses in the Powder River Basin have kept wages and benefits for permanent miners at a comparable rate or better than those in union mines, miners told *Militant* reporters.

Despite that, some miners complained about the rotating 12-hour shifts, and the unpaid 60-mile bus ride many have to make to get to work. The mine bosses have also been able to impose a seven-day work schedule that eliminates overtime pay for Saturday and Sunday.

Managers at the employment agencies Manpower and Adeco in Gillette said that hundreds of miners hired as temporary employees work for months and sometimes years for less wages and benefits before they are offered permanent positions.

Bob Samson is coal miner in Colorado.

Iraqi national vote

Continued from front page

voting was the extent to which Iraqi Kurds took advantage of the elections to advance their campaign for greater autonomy for the Kurdish region. Kurdish groups set up tents near polling stations in those areas and asked Kurds to cast a ballot in an unofficial referendum on independence, with widespread success.

This turn of events did not please Washington, London, and most governments in the region. Turkish government and military officials in Ankara had charged that Kurds were using the election campaign to establish control over Iraq's oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Turkey's foreign minister, Abdullah Gull, said Ankara would not sit idly by while Kurds took over Kirkuk, according to Agence France-Press.

The 240 polling sites in Najaf, which is considered the capital of the largely Shiite southern Iraq, swarmed with voters, according to a January 30 Reuters dispatch. Iraqi election officials estimated the turnout among Shiites would reach 85 percent, the January 31 *New York Times* reported. Most voters in Najaf, as well as most other Shiite cities, cast their ballots for the United Iraqi Alliance, a slate backed by Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the country's leading Shiite cleric. The *Financial Times* placed the turnout in the majority-Shiite city of Basra at 70 percent.

The United Iraqi Alliance slate includes the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Leaders of the group, who returned from exile in Iran following the overthrow of Hussein by the U.S. military, say the new government in Iraq will be secular not "Islamic."

Low turnout among Sunnis

Fareed Ayar, chairman of the Iraqi election commission, and Carlos Valenzuela, the United Nations election advisor in the country, said voting was higher than expected in Babil, Anbar, Diyala, and Nineveh provinces. They also said there were lines in Baquba, Mosul, and Fallujah—all part of the Sunni Triangle, reported the February 1 *New York Times*. The Chinese news agency Xinhua said voters turned out at eight polling stations in Fallujah but the number of votes remained unknown.

Agence France-Presse (AFP) reported, however, that there was little voting in the Sunni Triangle with few polling stations open. The report described the streets of Fallujah as "desolate." U.S. Marines along with British and Iraqi troops routed Baathist irregulars from their stronghold in Fallujah last November. Only a small portion of the city's former population of 250,000 has been allowed to return there since its takeover by U.S. occupation forces. While the Iraqi government claimed 60,000 have returned, the UN refugee agency says only 8,500 have come back and decided to stay.

According to the *Washington Post*, only six people voted in nearby Ramadi—the provincial governor, three of his deputies, the police chief, and a representative of the Iraqi Communist Party.

In Samarra, which U.S. forces retook from the Baathists last October, the head of the city council said there would be no voting out of concern for security, AFP reported.

Ayar said voter turnout in Barquba, which has a mix of Sunnis and Shiites, was 30 percent.

Turnout was higher than expected in Mosul, which has been the center of Baathist attacks since those forces were routed from Fallujah. In the two weeks before the elections, U.S. troop strength in and around the city was increased from 8,000 to 12,000. Another 4,500 Iraqi policemen and military personnel had been dispatched there too, according to the *Washington Post*.

The turnout in Sunni neighborhoods in Baghdad was also higher than expected, including in Adhamiyah where Hussein was last seen being cheered by crowds just before he fled the presidential palace.

A CBS News report cited a "steady stream" of voters in the "Triangle of Death" south of Baghdad. The area includes Shiites and Sunnis. But in Jurf as Sakhr, a Sunni town in the area, voters were directed to cast their ballots elsewhere as the government was not able to recruit any polling workers and the U.S. military had difficulty finding Iraqi contractors who would deliver bomb barriers.

Relatively minor bloodshed

A pledge by Baathists to "wash the streets with the blood of voters" did not materialize. According to press reports, 45 people were killed, including nine suicide bombers from the group led by Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi called "Al-Qaeda in Iraq." This registered the growing isolation of the Baathists and the progress the U.S. military is making in slowly dismantling their forces. Two days before the elections, the Iraqi government announced the capture of three alleged top aides to al-Zarqawi, bringing the total to six leaders of the group reportedly captured in recent months.

In a crackdown leading up to the vote, security forces of the Iraqi interim regime arrested 200 suspected Baathists and their supporters. The majority of them, 129, were from the northern city of Tikrit, which is also Hussein's hometown. Those arrested included two Saudis, an Egyptian, and a Yemeni, reported Reuters, but most were Iraqis.

Bipartisan support for war solidifies

U.S. president George Bush and his new secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, were measured in their descriptions of the election results. Recalling the central theme of his inaugural address, Bush said, "The world is hearing the voice of freedom from the center of the Middle East."

Speaking on ABC's "This Week" TV show January 30 as early reports came in from Iraq, Rice said the election is going "better than could have been expected." Asked whether the election results would lead to the beginning of a reduction of U.S. troops in Iraq, Rice said there is no timetable. She added that Washington would focus now on training Iraqi troops and having the "right combination" of U.S. and Iraqi forces.

John Kerry, the Democratic presidential candidate in 2004, downplayed the importance of the impact of the Iraqi elections. "I think it's gone as expected," he told the press. Asked by Tim Russert, the host of NBC TV's "Meet The Press," whether he agreed with a call by Sen. Edward Kennedy for a rapid timetable to withdraw U.S. troops, Kerry answered no, twice. He said that "security and stability" must be provided before turning Iraq over to the Iraqis. Kerry said he would most likely vote in favor of the administration's request for $80 billion in supplemental funding for the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Senate minority leader Harry Reid called

Getty Images/Mustafa Ozer

Kurdish men line up to vote at polling station adorned with Kurdish flag in Salahaddin, northern Iraq, January 30. Millions of Kurds saw election as an opportunity to advance struggle for self-determination. Kurdish groups set up tents near polling stations asking Kurds to cast ballots in a mock referendum for independence. Most did so.

the elections a "milestone," adding that "an exit strategy" is needed. In a joint press conference with House minority leader Nancy Pelosi, however, Reid took a stance similar to most other Democratic Party politicians. "As far as setting a timeline, as we learned in the Balkans, that's not a wise decision, because it only empowers those who don't want us there, and it doesn't work well to do that," Reid said.

"Even if things go extremely well, the next months will be fraught with tensions, making this exactly the wrong moment for the United States to be setting fixed troop-withdrawal targets, as some Democrats now propose," said the lead editorial in the February 2 *New York Times*, a paper that campaigned vigorously for Kerry's presidential bid and has continued to criticize the Bush administration's course in Iraq. "For the first time in this whole sorry enterprise, it now seems possible to imagine an acceptable political outcome."

Britain's prime minister, Anthony Blair, said the elections were a "blow to the heart of global terrorism," reported the BBC. Just weeks before the election, London dispatched a 600-strong battalion to reinforce its troops in southern Iraq. As many as 10 British soldiers were killed in a crash of a C-130 transport the day of the vote, which was seized by the British government and press to advance their patriotic pro-war campaign. Al-Jazeera broadcast a video tape in which a group calling itself "the 1920 Revolution Brigade" of the National Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed to have shot down the plane.

Approval of the outcome of the elections came from imperialist governments and other regimes that have criticized the Bush administration's course in the region, including many regimes in the Middle East and Central Asia.

French president Jacques Chirac, German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, and Russian president Vladimir Putin—each of whom criticized the U.S.-led assault on Iraq in 2003—expressed satisfaction with the election results, according to the January 31 *New York Times*.

Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, an Iranian government spokesperson, said the elections were "held freely" but under "difficult circumstances," the *Times* said.

The day before the elections, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak said U.S.-led troops should remain in Iraq after the January 30 vote in order to prevent the outbreak of civil war, the Associated Press reported.

Kurds press to bolster autonomy

At the same time, one development on election day worried Washington and its imperialist allies and most regimes in the region: what the Kurds did.

Turnout among Kurds in northeastern Iraq, also known as Iraqi Kurdistan, was also high, about 80 percent, reported AFP. The main Kurdish parties—the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—ran on a single slate in order to maximize the number of Kurds elected to the national assembly that will write the new constitution. Most Kurds are seeking to bolster the limited autonomy they have

Continued on page 9

Tel Aviv makes minor concessions to Palestinians

Continued from front page

and prevent it," Mofaz told Israel Radio January 30. "We talked about handing over responsibility, as has started in the Gaza Strip. We believe that in the next few days, they will get responsibility over other towns in the West Bank."

"The conditions have been created that will enable us and the Palestinians to reach a historic breakthrough in our relations," Sharon said in a January 27 speech. "We are following with great interest the recent developments in the Palestinian Authority and it is apparent that there is a positive approach to the fight against terrorism and to the furthering of the diplomatic process."

Sharon added, "If the Palestinians take extensive action to end terrorism, violence and incitement, we will be able to proceed in our contacts for the implementation of the road map and it is even possible to coordinate a variety of actions regarding the disengagement plan."

On January 21, the Palestinian Authority began deploying thousands of police in towns throughout the Gaza Strip to stop armed attacks from Palestinian groups on Israeli towns and settlements. According to Mofaz, since the deployment such attacks have been reduced by 75 percent in Gaza.

These moves are a continuation of the course the Palestinian leadership embarked upon with the signing of the Oslo "peace accord" in 1993. Recognizing that it could not defeat the Palestinian people's determination to fight for their homeland, Tel Aviv began working with the Palestinian Liberation Organization leadership to establish an apparatus that would aim to quell popular resistance to the theft of most Palestinian lands by the Israeli state in exchange for limited autonomy in the occupied territories.

Washington has played a central role in crafting this course. According to the January 30 issue of the Israeli daily *Haaretz*, the head of Israel's spy agency met with U.S. Central Intelligence Agency chief Porter Goss recently to discuss resuming direct "security" collaboration between the PA police and the Israeli secret services. The CIA played the role of go-between for the Israeli and Palestinian police agencies following the Oslo agreement. That arrangement disintegrated during the four-year long second Palestinian intifada, or uprising.

Tel Aviv has shown no sign of backing away from removing the security headache that its Gaza settlements pose. The small settler population sits on 20 percent of the territory. The remaining 80 percent of Gaza is home to 1.3 million Palestinians. It is one of the most densely populated areas of the world.

The conditions facing the majority in Gaza—compared to the relatively affluent lifestyles of Palestinian Authority leaders—have left the ruling Fatah party with a shrinking base in the region. In the initial round of municipal elections in Gaza January 27, Hamas, a Palestinian group that advocates the replacement of Israel with an Islamic republic, captured 77 of the 118 seats and 7 of 10 municipal councils. Fatah won only 26 seats. This round of elections did not include Gaza's major cities or refugee camps; the largest municipality was the central Gaza city of Deir al Balah, with a population of 60,000.

Hamas has led the armed campaign of suicide bombings and other attacks primarily targeting Israeli civilians in the last four years. It has been the main target of the Israeli rulers murderous offensive and many of its leaders have fallen victim to Israel's targeted assassinations.

The municipal elections drew a significantly larger percentage of voters to the polls than the January 9 vote that put Abbas in office. Eligible voter turnout in the presidential election was around 48 percent. The turnout in the local vote in Gaza, the Palestinian minister for local government said, was more than 85 percent. Hamas had called for a boycott of the presidential elections.

At the same time, Hamas leaders have shown an eagerness to work with Abbas towards a cease-fire with Tel Aviv. According to *Haaretz*, an agreement has been reached in principle between Hamas in Gaza and the PA president on the organization's involvement in diplomatic decision-making and a future Palestinian government.

According to the daily, "Hamas has agreed to accept the principle of a Palestinian state with the 1967 borders and its capital in Jerusalem as a basis for talks with Israel. Until now, Hamas has always defined Israel, even in its pre-1967 borders, as 'waqf land that must be liberated.' A waqf is a Muslim religious trust."

British soldiers tried for systematic abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Basra

Reuters

This photo, showing man tied up and hoisted on fork lift, was one of many a court released showing abuse of Iraqi inmates by British soldiers at supply depot in Basra.

BY PETE CLIFFORD

EDINBURGH, Scotland—Court-martial proceedings began January 18 against three British soldiers charged with abusing Iraqi prisoners in a case that mirrors the systematic humiliation and physical abuse by U.S. troops of Iraqis held at the Abu Ghraib prison. A fourth British soldier has already been convicted for offenses related to the photographing of Iraqi prisoners put in humiliating positions.

In an attempt to limit any damage to the image of the UK rulers' participation in the U.S.-led "coalition of the willing," Prime Minister Anthony Blair, Conservative leader Michael Howard, and army chief Gen. Michael Jackson have all condemned the prisoner abuse in Iraq, but claimed this case is an isolated incident. Within days of their statements the media spotlight on the issue had faded significantly.

Damning photos revealed

Revelations of the actions of the three members of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers under court-martial—Lance Cpl. Darren Larkin, Lance Cpl. Mark Cooley, and Cpl. Daniel Kenyon—came to a head when 22 photographs were submitted as evidence against them when the trial began in Osnabruck, Germany. The photos were taken May 15, 2003, at a British army-run supply depot near Basra in southern Iraq known as Camp Bread Basket. They show naked Iraqis—accused of looting the depot—being forced to simulate sex acts, and a blindfolded Iraqi tied up and suspended high in the air from the prongs of a fork lift truck.

Cooley has admitted to driving the fork lift, but said his purpose was only "to move the man out of the sun," the *Scotsman* reported.

The court-martial was told the soldiers were acting under orders from Major Dan Taylor. The three were ordered by Taylor to conduct an "Operation Ali Baba," referring to the story "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," to punish the prisoners. The soldiers were sent out with long sticks to hunt for the alleged looters. Once caught, the Iraqis' were, in army language, "beasted"—made to run in searing heat with large heavy boxes of dried milk on their heads. According to a January 21 BBC news report, Taylor was talked to by senior officers in a process known in army slang as an "interview without coffee," and the senior officers concluded he was guilty of no more than "misguided zeal."'

The photos only came to light when an assistant in a photo developing shop turned them over to the police. Fusilier Gary Bartlam has been convicted of a series of offenses for taking the photos. Kenyon and Cooley have denied all charges. Larkin admitted to the charge of battery, but denied committing any other offenses. The three each face terms of between four and 10 years in prison if convicted of all charges.

Damage control by British rulers

As the photos were displayed across the media in the United Kingdom and world wide, liberal columnists initially expressed concern that the role of the 9,000 UK troops in Iraq would be tarnished in the way the U.S. forces were after the brutality at Abu Ghraib came to light. For example, James Kirkup, writing in the Edinburgh-published *Scotsman*, said "The semi-myth of the British squaddie as multi-cultural latter-day saint, part aid worker, part diplomat and part muscular priest, is a comforting one, not least for Mr. Blair. Time and again we have been assured that Our Boys are different: they wear soft berets, not hard helmets; they befriend the local population, not kill them; they observe the laws and rules of war and peace, not violate them. That battle was won, but yesterdays images will not be erased from the imagination so easily or so soon."

Reacting quickly to widespread coverage of the brutal treatment by British soldiers in Basra, General Jackson stressed that only a "small number" of the 65,000 UK forces who have been deployed to Iraq were involved. Blair said "I hope we do not allow that [the photos] to tarnish the good name, fully deserved, of the British armed forces." Echoing Blair, Conservative leader Michael Howard claimed the photos "in no way reflect the true character of Britain's armed forces."

Within a few days the court-martial slipped from its position as a major news item. Despite this, its proceedings are revealing some of the breadth of what occurred. Testifying at the court-martial, Lt.-Colonel Nicholas Mercer said, "Once we moved into an occupation role from a battlefield one the situation changed and numbers of allegations were made that Iraqis were not being treated as properly as they should be." Mercer is reported to have issued an order five days after the photographed abuses occurred that "detainees should not be abused."

In a further sign of London's determination to drive ahead with the "war on terror," Home Secretary Charles Clarke announced new measures January 26 to extend detention without trial in the United Kingdom. Clarke said that on the basis of secret intelligence and decision by ministers, suspects could be subjected to house arrest, curfews, and electronic tagging as well as a ban on telephone and Internet use. Revealing the broad scope for this new assault on democratic rights, Clarke's advisor, Stephen McCabe, told the *Scotsman*, "We can envisage this applying to animal rights extremists and the far right." The announcement was made the day after four British men were released from Guantánamo Bay. Also, in December the Law Lords had ruled the detention of 12 men without trial in London's Belmarsh prison illegal. In announcing the new measures on detention, Clarke suggested he "should be applauded for accepting the Law Lords' judgment and working on that basis."

Meanwhile, military prosecutors in Copenhagen have charged a Danish army captain and four military police sergeants with the abuse of Iraqi prisoners at a military camp near Basra last year, according to the Associated Press. Charges against them include denying prisoners food and water.

Son of former British prime minister gets slap on wrist for coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea

BY JULIE CRAWFORD

LONDON—British businessman Mark Thatcher agreed to a plea bargain January 13 in a South African court over his role in an aborted coup against the government of the West African nation of Equatorial Guinea. Under the terms of the agreement, he received a four-year suspended sentence, was fined 3 million rand (£265,000 or U.S.$500,000), and will "cooperate" with prosecutors in their investigation.

Thatcher is the son of former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher. He could have faced a much more severe punishment: a five-year prison term followed by a four-year suspended sentence.

Mark Thatcher pleaded guilty to participating in the attempt by the exiled opposition from Equatorial Guinea to overthrow the West African government. He had agreed to pay $275,000 to help the coup-plotters charter an Alouette III helicopter. Thatcher had acted in conjunction with his business partner, Simon Mann, the owner of the company that was handling the charter of the helicopter. Mann is a former officer in the British Special Air Service (SAS), an elite unit of the British military.

Mann headed Executive Outcomes, a mercenary force with a record of defending British imperialist interests across Africa over the past decade. He left the army in the mid-1990s to establish mercenary operations, often referred to euphemistically as "security firms."

In 1995 Mann's mercenary group was responsible for defeating forces of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone and helping establish the more pro-imperialist regime of President Ahmad Tejah Kabbah. Mann is now serving a four-year prison term in Zimbabwe for his part in the Equatorial Guinea coup.

Thatcher's lawyers said their client was "not charged with any involvement in the attempted coup d'etat in Equatorial Guinea. The plea bargain was entered into solely as a result of his financing of the charter of a helicopter in circumstances where he should have exercised more caution."

Recent revelations have implicated the governments of both Britain and Spain in backing the failed coup attempt last March. The coup was aimed at overthrowing the government of President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. At the time, Zimbabwean police in Harare impounded a plane that flew from South Africa with 64 mercenaries on board. A couple days later, an Equatorial Guinean minister announced that an advanced team of 15 coup plotters had been captured in Equatorial Guinea. The majority of those arrested were based in South Africa. The government of Equatorial Guinea has also accused Ely Calil, a London-based oil millionaire, and David Hart, a Tory party political advisor, of involvement in the coup. According to an article in the *Guardian*, Hart was Margaret Thatcher's "chief enforcer during the (1984–5) miners' strike," and "handed out money to strike breakers from a suite in Claridges," a hotel.

Lawyers for the government of Equatorial Guinea also want to question London businessman Greg Wales, Tory peer and novelist Jeffrey Archer, and EU commissioner Peter Mandelson. The lawyers said that "opportunities to invest in the plot were touted in the drawing rooms of London society." Michael Ancram, the Tory foreign affairs spokesperson, questioned Prime Minister Anthony Blair and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in Parliament, asking whether any ministers or officials have had discussions with Peter Mandelson about Equatorial Guinea in the past 12 months. The Tory attack is made in the wake of revelations by Straw that the Foreign Office has had knowledge of the coup plot for more than a year. In November 2004 Straw was forced to retract denials from two newspapers that he had no such intelligence information.

Equatorial Guinea is a former Spanish colony. Spain is now home to Severo Moto, head of the self-proclaimed government in exile. Miguel Mifuno, an advisor to Equatorial Guinea's president, has charged Madrid with sending a warship with 500 marines that was due to arrive in Equatorial Guinea the day of the coup. The Spanish government has denied the allegations.

Equatorial Guinea has become Africa's third-largest oil producer in the last decade, making it an important prize in the competition, especially between Washington and Paris, for influence in the region. Exxon is already exporting nearly 300,000 barrels of oil a day from there to the United States. Marathon is investing $3 billion in one of the world's largest natural gas plants.

Growing U.S. intervention in Africa includes the "show of force" by a U.S. Navy battle group off the waters of Nigeria, São Tomé, Equatorial Guinea, and other African oil producing countries in mid-2004. U.S. officials said the foray was part of "Operation Summer Pulse '04," whose aim was to show the world that "even with all of its current responsibilities, [Washington] can still position half-a-dozen aircraft carriers with all the necessary support ships in the four corners of the world, at the same time."

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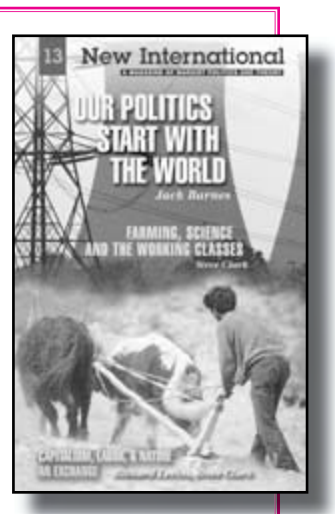

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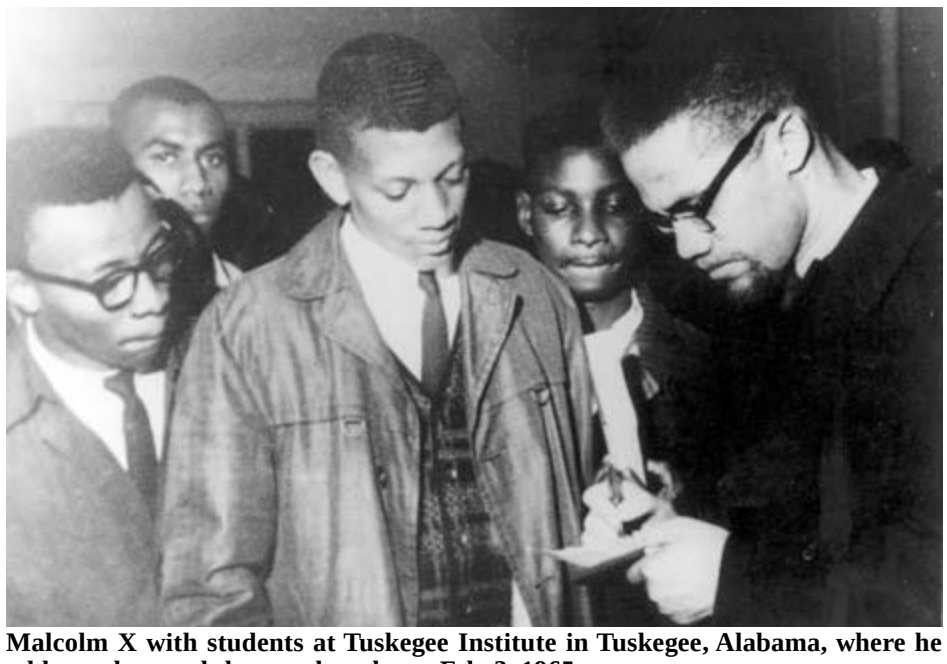
The freedom struggle—from Mississippi to Congo

Below is an excerpt from *Habla Malcolm X* (the Spanish-language edition of *Malcolm X Speaks*), one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month in February. At the end of 1964 a delegation of 37 teenage civil rights workers from McComb, Mississippi, came to Harlem, New York, on Christmas break. On Jan. 1, 1965, they met with Malcolm X. Below is a portion of what Malcolm told them. *Habla Malcolm X* has made the speeches of this outstanding revolutionary leader available in Spanish for the first time. Copyright © 1993 by Betty Shabaz and Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Malcolm X with students at Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, where he addressed several thousand students, Feb. 3, 1965.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY MALCOLM X

I was fortunate enough to be able to take a tour of the African continent during the summer. I went to Egypt, then to Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea, Liberia and Algeria. I found, while I was traveling on the African continent, I had already detected it in May, that someone had very shrewdly planted the seed of division on this continent to make the Africans not show genuine concern with our problem, just as they plant seeds in your and my minds so that we won't show concern with the African problem....

I also found that in many of these African countries the head of state is genuinely concerned with the problem of the black man in this country; but many of them thought if they opened their mouths and voiced their concern that they would be insulted by the American Negro leaders. Because one head of state in Asia voiced his support of the civil-rights struggle [in 1963] and a couple of the Big Six had the audacity to slap his face and say they weren't interested in that kind of help—which in my opinion is asinine. So the African leaders only had to be convinced that if they took an open stand at the governmental level and showed interest in the problem of black people in this country, they wouldn't be rebuffed.

And today you'll find in the United Nations, and it's not an accident, that every time the Congo question or anything on the African continent is being debated, they couple it with what is going on, or what is happening to you and me, in Mississippi and Alabama and these other places. In my opinion, the greatest accomplishment that was made in the struggle of the black man in America in 1964 toward some kind of real progress was the successful linking together of our problem with the African problem, or making our problem a world problem. Because now, whenever anything happens to you in Mississippi, it's not just a case of somebody in Alabama getting indignant, or somebody in New York getting indignant. The same repercussions that you see all over the world when an imperialist or foreign power interferes in some section of Africa—you see repercussions, you see the embassies being bombed and burned and overturned—nowadays, when something happens to black people in Mississippi, you'll see the same repercussions all over the world.

I wanted to point this out to you because it is important for you to know that when you're in Mississippi, you're not alone. As long as you think you're alone, then you take a stand as if you're a minority or as if you're outnumbered, and that kind of stand will never enable you to win a battle. You've got to know that you've got as much power on your side as that Ku Klux Klan has on its side. And when you know that you've got as much power on your side as the Klan has on its side, you'll talk the same kind of language with that Klan as the Klan is talking with you....

I think in 1965, whether you like it, or I like it, or they like it, or not, you will see that there is a generation of black people becoming mature to the point where they feel that they have no more business being asked to take a peaceful approach than anybody else takes, unless everybody's going to take a peaceful approach.

So we here in the Organization of Afro-American Unity are with the struggle in Mississippi one thousand per cent. We're with the efforts to register our people in Mississippi to vote one thousand per cent. But we do not go along with anybody telling us to help nonviolently. We think that if the government says that Negroes have a right to vote, and then some Negroes come out to vote, and some kind of Ku Klux Klan is going to put them in the river, and the government doesn't do anything about it, it's time for us to organize and band together and equip ourselves and qualify ourselves to protect ourselves. And once you can protect yourself, you don't have to worry about being hurt....

If you don't have enough people down there to do it, we'll come down there and help you do it. Because we're tired of this old runaround that our people have been given in this country. For a long time they accused me of not getting involved in politics. They should've been glad I didn't get involved in politics, because anything I get in, I'm in it all the way. If they say we don't take part in the Mississippi struggle, we will organize brothers here in New York who know how to handle these kind of affairs, and they'll slip into Mississippi like Jesus slipped into Jerusalem.

That doesn't mean we're against white people, but we sure are against the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Councils; and anything that looks like it's against us, we're against it. Excuse me for raising my voice, but this thing, you know, gets me upset. Imagine that—a country that's supposed to be a democracy, supposed to be for freedom and all of that kind of stuff when they want to draft you and put you in the army and send you to Saigon to fight for them—and then you've got to turn around and all night long discuss how you're going to just get a right to register and vote without being murdered. Why, that's the most hypocritical government since the world began! ...

You get freedom by letting your enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom; then you'll get it. It's the only way you'll get it. When you get that kind of attitude, they'll label you as a "crazy Negro," or they'll call you a "crazy nigger"—they don't say Negro. Or they'll call you an extremist or a subversive, or seditious, or a red or a radical. But when you stay radical long enough, and get enough people to be like you, you'll get your freedom....

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— GREAT SOCIETY

Then what?—"A Pittsburgh brokerage, surveying its richest clients, found that virtually all

respondents believe they need to double their wealth to be financially secure."—*Barron's* financial magazine.

Essence of capitalism—The record rains that drenched California took a toll in lives and countless hillside homes were damaged or destroyed by massive mudslides. Nearly 2,000 insurance claims were filed, but few will collect. The fine print specifies that the coverage is for water, not mud.

Sensible—A federal judge in Atlanta instructed a suburban school board to remove the stickers they pasted into high school biology textbooks. The stickers asserted that evolution is "a theory, not a fact." The judge correctly read this as an unconstitutional religious argument. A lawyer for the parents who sued welcomed the ruling as enabling students to study science "unadulterated by religious dogma."

Barely a mention—The Navajo Nation reservation in Arizona was hard hit by winter storms. Joe Shirley, president of the Nation, met with the governor to discuss damaged areas of the reservation. One person died of exposure, Shirley reported. Supplies are running low. People are running out of coal and firewood. The storm soaked dirt roads, creating ruts nearly a foot deep, and some children are unable to get to school.

Meanwhile...—*The Rocky Mountain News* reports that 110,000 households in Colorado are facing their heat and lights being cut off this winter because of continuing soaring utility rates. Energy Outreach Colorado, an assistance group, adds that the situation was so bad recently that many low income groups and seniors came into this winter with bills up to $500 from last year.

'No child left behind?'—In Vermont, an evacuation test has been set for schools in the area of the Yankee nuclear power plant. A "flawed" drill was held at the end of last year. Nearly 1,000 students could not be evacuated because of an acute shortage of school busses. Officials said there was a breakdown of communications.

Praise the lord and fill the tank—In Tampa, Florida, Revival Ministers International led a seven-day Camp meeting. In addition to pie-in-the-sky, participants had a shot at a grand door prize—a $50,000 Hummer. But we see a problem. The winner may have to bulldoze (Hummerdoze?) the house next door to provide an adequate driveway. The prize Hummer is said to be 10 by 16 feet. Maybe it's really a stripped-down Humvee back from Iraq.

'Che Talks to Young People' now available in Greek

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN

ATHENS, Greece—The last week of December, 1,000 copies of the newly published Greek-language edition of *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* rolled off the presses here. The book was published and is being distributed in this country by Diethnes Vima. It is a translation of the English- and Spanish-language editions of the same title published by Pathfinder Press.

In addition to eight speeches by Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara, the book includes a preface by Armando Hart, an introduction by Mary-Alice Waters, and the speech Cuban president Fidel Castro gave when the remains of Guevara and his comrades were returned to Cuba from Bolivia in 1997. It also contains photos, glossary, and an index.

The translation and publication of the book is the result of the work of 14 volunteers in Greece. Bobbis Misailides and Natasha Terlexis edited the translation.

In the second week of January—the first time the new edition was distributed here—53 copies of the book were ordered by nine bookstores in central Athens. An additional 12 copies of other titles published by Diethnes Vima were also ordered.

During the third week of January, volunteers placed orders for another 42 copies of the book, along with 30 copies of other Diethnes Vima titles, at six bookstores. The largest bookstore in Athens, a five-story shop, which also has the biggest chain of such stores, ordered 20 copies of *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* in Greek, as well as 10 copies each of the Greek-language editions of *Problems of Women's Liberation* and *Imperialism's March Toward Fascism and War.* This particular bookstore had not placed an order for Diethnes Vima titles for 11 years.

Volunteers distributing the book said that the response by bookstore managers to *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* has been quite warm. Prior to the visits, each store received by fax a press announcement of the book's publication along with a copy of the cover. A number of managers said they had seen the announcement and decided to place an order after reading it. In one major store, which had not ordered any Diethnes Vima titles in three years, the manager put in an order for 10 copies of the new book and asked for a catalogue to place orders for other titles too. In the northern city of Katerini, a five-hour drive from Athens, one bookstore placed an order for 10 copies of the new book along with five other Diethnes Vima titles.

The publication of this book coincided with the final days of the showing of the film *The Motorcycle Diaries,* depicting Guevara in his youth, at movie houses here. Two cinemas each placed an order of 10 copies to be sold at the film showings.

The Greek-Cuban Friendship Association has decided to purchase an initial stock of 100 copies of the book to have available at a January 30 meeting to be held in Athens celebrating the Cuban Revolution. The Association said it will also make the book available for sale at other Cuban solidarity activities and at their offices.

On January 16, eight volunteers who had worked on the book's production met to map out a promotional effort. Plans include broadening placement of the book in neighborhood bookstores in working-class districts beyond the center of the Greek capital, visiting the University of Athens bookstore, tabling on that campus with the book and other titles, sending a team to farmers' mobilizations due in the north of the country at the end of January, and accepting two offers to present the book at public meetings at the Katerini Public Library and at the immigrant rights club in Athens. Presswork was planned too. A separate release will also be sent to publications dealing with educational issues. One of the volunteer translators, who teaches Greek at the University of Athens, took an initial consignment of 10 copies to sell.

"The results of our efforts to distribute the new book have been very exciting," said Terlexis February 2. "To date 256 copies have been either purchased or ordered. 108 were ordered by bookstores. Last night we got a call from one of Athens's main bookstores ordering more because their initial order of 5 had sold out. In addition, 56 other titles have been ordered or sold, bringing the total titles sold in the last three weeks to 312!"

Outlining the importance of the current book at the January 16 meeting, Terlexis compared it to recent works about Che found in Athens stores. There is a general tendency to separate Che Guevara from the Cuban Revolution, she said. Although most of these books salute Che's "heroic efforts," they present him as a romantic but unrealistic figure. "Guevara, who was born in Argentina, became a product of the Cuban Revolution and a leader of it," Terlexis said. "His internationalist missions were not adventures but rather attempts at expanding the struggle against imperialism and for socialist revolution by workers and farmers. Che and Cuba go together, then as now."

Che Talks to Young People

In eight talks between 1959 and 1964, the Argentine-born revolutionary challenges youth of Cuba and the world to become a different kind of human being as they strive together with working people of all lands to transform the world.

Greek edition published by Diethnes Vima is available from Pathfinder Press at website below. $18 Also available in English and Spanish for $14.95.

WWW.PATHFINDERPRESS.COM

National elections in Iraq

Continued from page 6

enjoyed in Iraqi Kurdistan since the early 1990s, under the protection of U.S. and British forces that imposed a no-fly zone in northern Iraq after the 1991 Gulf War.

In tents set up outside polling centers—with the approval of the Kurdish regional government—members of the Kurdish Referendum Movement conducted an "unofficial vote" on independence, reported the *Washington Post*. The group handed out more than 2 million forms asking voters if they wanted an independent Kurdistan, said AFP. Last December, the group handed the chief UN elections official in Iraq a petition asking for a referendum on Kurdish independence. It was signed by more than 1.7 million Kurds, almost half the adult Kurdish population in northern Iraq.

A representative for the Kurdish slate said the electoral coalition was leading the vote in Kirkuk. Leaders of the Kurdish regional government have stated their desire to take over the city, which so far Washington has opposed. Thousands of Kurds were forcibly removed from the town and surrounding region by the Hussein regime, which settled Sunni Arabs in their place in order to consolidate control of the oil-rich region. Thousands of Kurds have resettled in the area, reportedly displacing more than 100,000 Arabs.

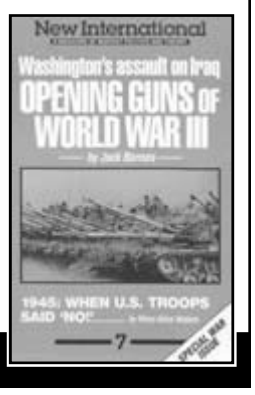
Turkey's foreign minister, Abdullah Gull, said the situation in Kirkuk "has reached dangerous proportions." The chief of staff of Turkey's military, Gen. Ilker Basburg, denounced "hundreds of thousands of Kurds who have migrated to Kirkuk to register to vote," according to Al-Jazeera TV.

Together with another 20 million Kurds living in a territory that covers parts of Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Armenia, the Iraqi Kurds make up an oppressed nation first subjugated by the Ottoman empire. Baghdad, Ankara, Tehran, and Damascus fear that any move toward independence, or even formal autonomy, by Iraqi Kurds could be a mortal threat to their regimes as it would inspire national struggles among their Kurdish populations.

Washington's Assault on Iraq: Opening Guns of World War III

by Jack Barnes

In this lead article of *New International* no. 7, Barnes explains that the devastation of Iraq through the 1991 U.S.-led Gulf War did not lead to a new world order. It held a mirror to the declining capitalist order and accelerated its contradictions. It sounded the opening guns of sharpening conflicts and class battles that will decide whether the horrors of World War II are inflicted on humanity or a road is opened by working people to a socialist future. $12



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— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO

February 15, 1980

GREENSBORO, N.C.—It was a chanting, stamping, singing, shouting victory march here February 2 as 7,000 antiracist protesters demonstrated against Ku Klux Klan violence.

They came together from every state in the South and from many parts of the East and Midwest to protest the brutal KKK-Nazi murder of five anti-Klan demonstrators, members of the Communist Workers Party, who were gunned down in Greensboro last November 3.

The turnout for this broadly sponsored action was an impressive victory.

A victory over the Klan, which didn't dare show its face on the streets of Greensboro, much less assault the demonstrators.

A victory over the cops, who had stood by and allowed the November 3 massacre but were forced to cooperate with the organizers of the February 2 march and to muzzle their Klan collaborators.

A victory over state and city authorities, who had done everything they could in the weeks before the action to sabotage it, resorting to red-baiting and baseless warnings that violence would occur.

Last but not least, the demonstration was a victory over North Carolina employers, who seek to use KKK terrorism and intimidation to keep Black and white workers divided and to block union organizing efforts.

February 14, 1955

CLEVELAND—The first test of the legality of Jim Crow schools in the North since the Supreme Court decision last May which declared public school segregation unconstitutional has demonstrated the inadequacy of depending on the courts to uphold civil rights.

U.S. District Judge John H. Druffel denied a petition for an injunction to prevent the Hillsboro, Ohio, School Board from enforcing a zoning ordinance passed last September to compel Negro children to attend a Jim Crow school. The Plaintiffs, Negro parents whose children are being denied their constitutional rights, have announced they will continue to keep their children out of school pending an appeal.

In a decision smacking of the worst kind of Dixie "justice," Judge Druffel called the request for an injunction "class action" and said "local conditions" guided his decision.

Rejecting the judge's reasoning, local observers point out that: (1) Segregated schools are not the rule in surrounding communities. (2) Hillsboro itself does not maintain segregation above grade school level. (3) Ohio, unlike states involved in the cases on which the Supreme Court ruled last May, does not have a law requiring segregated schools. (4) Ordinances and rulings denying equal rights to one group in the population represent the most blatant kind of "class action."

EDITORIALS

The unintended effects of the Iraq war

The January 30 national elections in Iraq are a victory for Washington and its imperialist-dominated coalition that has occupied the country for nearly two years. For the U.S. rulers the Iraqi vote has solidified further bipartisan support for the course the Bush administration has charted to defend the interests of finance capital. The same is true for most of Washington's imperialist allies, particularly London.

In his inaugural speech for a second term in the White House, Bush trumpeted once again "freedom" not "stabilization," and "liberty" not the "balance of power." This registered not just a change in watchwords. It showed a historic shift in world political strategy under this administration, compared to Clinton and his predecessors. The "Bush doctrine" is a reversal, following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, of what most in the U.S. ruling class in both imperialist parties—the Democrats and Republicans—agree was 25 years of inadequate responses to "terrorist" attacks on U.S. targets and belated action against states deemed capable of developing weapons and delivery systems endangering U.S. imperial interests.

There was a high turnout in the elections among Shiites and Kurds, who comprise about 80 percent of Iraq's population, and relatively little disruption from the forces that had promised to turn the vote into a bloodbath. As expected, the turnout among Sunni Arabs was minimal. This outcome, with all its bumps, will make it slightly easier for Washington and its allies to pursue their "war on terrorism."

The new regime that emerges from the elections will serve U.S. imperialism's strategic interests in the region.

Whatever government is put together, however, will be an unstable regime. It will have to seek an equilibrium between the increasingly autonomous Kurdish region in the north and rival political forces from within the Shiite majority and Sunni minority.

The Baathist regime was based among sectors of the Sunni population with a vested class interest in preserving the minority privileges bestowed on them by British imperialism. Among the bloodiest dictatorships in Middle East history, over their 40 years in power the Baathist rulers systematically organized the wholesale slaughter of dissenting Baathist forces, Communist Party members and those accused of being communists, and Shiite and Kurdish leaders.

Following the 1991 Gulf War, under the cover of U.S. and British imperialism's no-fly zone, the Iraqi Kurdish region functioned more and more as a separate country. Leaders of the Kurdish area, which has its own government and the best trained and most disciplined indigenous armed force in Iraq—the pesh merga—are determined to claim a substantial share of control over any revenues from the oilfields along the perimeter of the region. And they are demanding reversal of the Baathists' "Arabization" of Kirkuk and other cities and towns in Kurdish areas.

With the U.S. presidential race safely behind it, the Bush administration in November relaunched the war in Iraq to consolidate power over the Baathist strongholds in the center of the country, beginning with the swift and brutal takeover of Fallujah. Washington had originally stopped short of carrying through to the end this fight following the taking of Baghdad in April 2003. Forces from Hussein's elite Republican Guard and secret police used the time to regroup as well-financed Baathist irregulars and to link up with groups such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's "Al-Qaeda in Iraq."

U.S. forces conducted this stage in the war with little opposition among the Shiite population, who have themselves been targets of the Baathist terror, bombings, and assassinations. Washington has also received substantial support in the Kurdish regions.

Despite deep wells of hatred among the Iraqi toilers for the imperialist occupiers, the detested Baathist forces and their allies who are waging the war they didn't fight in 2003 are incapable of mobilizing and leading a revolutionary national liberation struggle in Iraq. None has a class interest or program to unite the workers and peasants of Iraq to advance their national sovereignty.

A telling confirmation of this reality has been the stunning absence of any broad outpouring of opposition to the imperialist invasion and occupation of Iraq anywhere in the Middle East, or in any predominantly Muslim country. To the contrary, governments from Morocco to Jordan and Indonesia have been under little pressure at home to pull back from their course of lining up behind Washington and Baghdad to legitimize, however "critically," the U.S.-installed regime and the January 30 elections. Reactions to the recent Iraqi elections from government officials and most media from Egypt to Saudi Arabia and Lebanon are another affirmation of this fact.

The unintended effect of the imperialists' course, however, is to open up space in Iraq and throughout the region for the working class and peasants to organize and fight to advance their interests; to open up space for oppressed nations such as the Kurds; to open up space for the fight to advance women's equality; to open up space to advance the separation of religious institutions from politics and the state; to open up space for the circulation of propaganda popularizing and explaining proletarian politics.

The bold move by Kurdish groups on election day to organize outside polling stations in northern Iraq a mock referendum for the independence of Iraqi Kurdistan—which is opposed by virtually all other political forces in Iraq, Washington, London, and all the regimes in the region—is a stunning illustration of this reality.

The unintended consequences of U.S. imperialism's course throughout the Middle East, South Asia, North Africa, and beyond will continue to unfold. That is the future the imperialists can do nothing to avoid.

Fight new restrictions on gov't workers

The new set of personnel rules the White House released January 26 for employees of the Department of Homeland Security not only weakens union protections for those workers, but threatens the very existence of their unions. As the Bush administration has announced, with bipartisan backing, Washington also intends to extend the new restrictions to other government workers. In addition, the rules set a dangerous precedent that lay the groundwork for the government and employers to impose similar restrictions on unions in private industry under the pretext of protecting "national security."

Workers, farmers, young people, and all defenders of workers' rights should fight this latest attack by the U.S. rulers on the use of union power.

Under the banner of "fighting terrorism," the government at all levels and the two main parties that serve the interests of finance capital—the Democrats and Republicans—are probing to see how far they can go in eroding the ability of the unions to defend workers' interests and pushing to minimize the proportion of those organized.

The ruling class is getting help in this anti-union campaign from the labor officialdom. The lawsuit union officials filed against the new restrictions will be ineffective at best. Their arguments to back up the action are even worse. "To introduce a highly speculative overhaul of the government's stable personnel structure at this time—to put that agency through unnecessary turmoil when our nation is at war—is simply dangerous," said AFL-CIO president John Sweeney. "The civil servants at Homeland Security represent the best of the best doing the toughest job in the world. We need programs and structures that respect the work they're doing—not ones that hurt morale and leave their pay to the whims of their employers."

This line of reasoning buys lock, stock, and barrel into the American patriotism that serves the interests of the bosses. The U.S. rulers will continue pressing for civilian employees of the armed forces and related "homeland security" agencies to be increasingly nonunion and without civil service protections.

In any imperialist military and related "security" structures, nonunion civilian employees are simply more trustworthy, more reliable for the government. Only union bureaucrats pretend otherwise. Union-conscious workers in military or "homeland security" jobs are less likely to sacrifice for the "common good," even if they're still taken in to one degree or another by bourgeois patriotism. A worker doesn't need to be a communist to recognize that appeals for "patriotic sacrifice" serve the interests of the employing class, providing a pretext to degrade working conditions and weaken the labor movement.

Equally misleading is the recent statement by AFL-CIO spokeswoman Sarah Massey that "good jobs are still disappearing." She said this to justify the inability of AFL-CIO tops to reverse the decline in the proportion of organized labor. Massey's dictum takes bourgeois thought to the hoop! "Good jobs," with livable wages and benefits, are not "disappearing."

The bosses have been driving for the last 25 years—industry by industry and factory by factory—to lower wages and worsen working conditions. And they are getting away with it because the labor officialdom in most cases feels the pain of "our company" and misguides workers with the line that their enemy is not their employers and the entire boss class in the United States, but imports from China and lack of protectionist laws. Under such conditions, for example, the meatpacking bosses have gutted wages and turned meat cutting and processing into the most dangerous factory occupation in the country.

This class-collaborationist course of the labor officialdom—promoting the fallacy that workers and employers have common interests—in face of the bosses' profit drive translates into the ongoing weakening of the labor movement. At the same time, workers today who take the lead in reaching for and using union power, and join with others to resist the bosses' antilabor offensive as the social consequences of the capitalist crisis grow, are planting the only viable seeds for the different kind of labor movement that's sorely needed.

Miami Haitians rally

Continued from front page

strators, who began rallying at 3:00 p.m. despite intermittent rain squalls. People made their way to the rally as they got off work or school. Many arrived after dark, some still wearing their hard hats from construction sites or dressed in work uniforms from jobs in health care facilities, restaurants, or trucking. A teacher encouraged his students to participate by offering extra credit.

Members of the Negra Hipólita Bolivarian Circle of Miami, an organization that promotes opposition to U.S. intervention in Venezuela, were there too.

Three vanloads of protestors came to the rally from West Palm Beach, about 60 miles up the coast from Miami.

Ten workers from Point Blank Body Armor in Oakland Park, Florida, battled the Friday afternoon rush hour traffic to participate—although some arrived after the event was over. Several brought their children or friends and family members. One young worker said it was her first rally. Another said she had been participating in Haitian rights rallies since the 1980s. The president, vice president, and secretary of UNITE-HERE Local 25-70, the newly chartered local at Point Blank Body Armor, said they drove down to represent the local at the rally but got stuck in traffic.

"Stop the arrests, stop the deportations!" protesters chanted. "Free the Haitian detainees and grant them Temporary Protected Status (TPS)," others said. TPS gives immigrants extended permission to stay and work in the United States, forestalling deportation. It was granted by an act of Congress to tens of thousands of immigrants from Central America in the wake of Hurricane Mitch.

Deportations to Haiti are particularly devastating to workers today, speakers at the rally said, given the widespread unemployment there, the profound damage to the country due to imperialist exploitation and deepened by a series of devastating floods which killed thousands last year, ongoing repression against government opponents since the military coup that ousted the former government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the occupation of the country by foreign troops. Haitians deported from the United States after being charged for criminal offenses are thrown into Haiti's brutal prison system, which is overflowing with political prisoners.

Haitians more than qualify for Temporary Protected Status, several of the speakers said.

'Cops stop Haitians everywhere'

Arrests of immigrants, especially Haitians, are an everyday reality here, with many being stopped on the street and deported for lack of proof of residency status.

"They stop Haitians on the street, in the malls, where they work, everywhere," Fresnel Laurent told the press at the protest. "I guess we're easy to be spotted because we're black. They take them and send them back to Haiti."

FANM executive director Marleine Bastien told the *St. Petersburg Times* that immigration authorities boarded a Miami city bus and asked everyone for their identification. The paper sites several other examples including Rony Francois, a 30-year-old Greyhound bus driver from Dania, Florida, who was stopped by immigration agents on Christmas Eve while on his way to church and thrown in jail. The worker had been in the United States 10 years and was in the process of obtaining residency papers. "He's never been in any trouble, never committed any crime," Merline Francois, his wife, 23, told the *St. Petersburg Times*. "Why arrest someone like that?" Other examples include a pastor in West Palm Beach pursuing permanent residency who was arrested in his home, and a handful of Haitians arrested at a Sav-a-Lot grocery store in Orlando as examples. "It's a witch hunt," said Bastien.

Jean-Robert Lafortune, president of the Haitian-American Grassroots Coalition, told the South Florida *Sun Sentinel* that 28 undocumented Haitians are being held at the Krome detention center west of Miami, and face deportation procedures, after being rounded up at bus stops and grocery stores in recent weeks.

The crackdown meshes with a "sanitary cordon" U.S. Coast Guard vessels have set up off the coast of Haiti, several protesters said, which is stopping many would-be immigrants from reaching the coast of Florida.

According to the Immigration and Customs Enforcement office in Miami, in fiscal year 2004—from Oct. 1, 2003, to Sept. 31, 2004—there were 753 Haitians deported, compared to 1,019 a year earlier. Speakers at the rally said, however, that the recent surge of reported arrests, which dates back to November, marks a new, harsher phase in detentions and expulsions of Haitians.

A dangerous precedent

At the same time, Washington has set a dangerous precedent in the case of another Haitian immigrant that could be used against naturalized citizens.

On January 5, the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals based in Atlanta ordered the deportation of Lionel Jean-Baptiste, a Miami restaurant owner who was naturalized as a U.S. citizen in 1996. The court ruled he was not of "good moral character" when he applied for citizenship. The ruling was based on a conviction after he became a citizen, for allegedly "conspiring to distribute cocaine" during the application period.

"In many ways it's open season on immigrants," Cheryl Little, executive director of the Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, told the South Florida *Sun Sentinel*. "For them to go to such lengths as to look back in a record where someone has already been granted citizenship suggests they may be looking at this as a test case."

The January 10 *Miami Herald* published an article titled "Case raises citizen rights issues; A ruling by an appellate court in Atlanta last week could make foreign-born U.S. citizens more vulnerable to revocation of their citizenship."

The article quoted Ira Kurzban, an immigration lawyer and University of Miami adjunct law professor. "They are setting a frightening precedent that would allow attacks on people's citizenship virtually at will on a theory that the government believes they lacked good moral character," Kurzban told the *Herald*. "It means once a foreign national's citizenship is obtained, it is no longer secure."

N.Y. governor seeks Medicaid, education cuts

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

NEW YORK—Governor George Pataki made a series of proposals in Albany, the New York state capital, January 18 that would cut state funding for social programs. Under the banner of reducing the budget deficit by more than $4 billion, Pataki proposed slashing Medicaid, welfare payments, and funding for state universities, while increasing public transportation fares and sales taxes.

If implemented, the proposed measures would affect hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of working people across the state who would bear the brunt of the government's "budget crisis." The proposed cuts would shift more of the costs of health care, education, public transportation, and other government-funded services onto individuals and their families.

The state legislature is to vote on the governor's proposals by April 1.

In his speech on the budget, Pataki emphasized that as much as $1.1 billion in Medicaid funding would be on the chopping block this fiscal year. Medicaid is a means-tested health insurance plan for working people with low incomes, the unemployed, elderly, and disabled. It was a byproduct of the civil rights movement of the 1960s that extended Social Security. Last year, nearly 4 million people were eligible for Medicaid throughout New York state.

In his remarks, Pataki claimed Medicaid is "crushing taxpayers," and said the state government "must take action to address the rapidly escalating costs of Medicaid." An article in the January 19 *Daily News* said that, under these proposals, Medicaid recipients "wouldn't be covered for treatment by private dentists, podiatrists, clinical psychologists or private duty nurses."

In addition, the 2005 state budget aims to reduce health-care coverage offered by Family Health Plus, a state-funded health insurance plan for those with incomes above the cap to qualify for Medicaid. The *News* also reported that 340,000 working families enrolled in Family Health Plus would no longer be eligible for mental health treatment and would have to pay a new $250 fee for each hospital visit.

Pataki also said the cuts would aim to "right-size the health care system," by shutting down "underutilized" public hospitals and nursing homes, and shifting more of the expense of medical services and care for the elderly and disabled onto the backs of working families. "Nursing homes should be an option, but not the only option," he said. "More and more seniors can and want to stay in their own homes," he added.

Jennifer Cunningham, the political director of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1199, said that these budget proposals would lead to about $3 billion in health-care cuts across the state.

Welfare "reform" is high on the list of priorities for this year's proposed cuts. "One million fewer New Yorkers are on welfare than there were a decade ago," the governor said in his January 18 address.

May 1, 2003, protest organized by CUNY 4 All, an organization that fights against efforts to restrict access to City University of New York schools.

In 1996, the Clinton administration ended "welfare as we know it," eliminating Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a federal program that was established with the Social Security Act in the 1930s as a result of the labor upsurge at the time, during the Great Depression. Over the last decade, all welfare payments have been shifted onto the state budgets while millions have been cut off completely from these benefits.

Further tuition hikes in the state and city university system are also in the works. An article in the January 19 *New York Times* said the state budget "proposes to cut $137 million from operating costs at the senior colleges." Annual tuition at the State University of New York (SUNY) system is slated to increase by $500 and at the City University of New York (CUNY) system by $250.

The *Ithaca Journal* reported in a January 5 article that Chancellor Robert King, the head of SUNY, had earlier proposed a tuition hike of $600 dollars and additional tuition rises each year. In 2003, state aid to the SUNY schools was cut by $184 million, or 15 percent, and SUNY tuition went up by 28 percent. The CUNY system had free tuition for New York City students up until the first post–World War II worldwide recession of 1974–75.

According to the *New York Times*, Pataki's budget proposals include payments of only 23 percent of the $1.4 billion that was recommended by a court-appointed panel for funding New York City schools this year alone. A significant portion of the revenue would come from opening eight new lottery gaming facilities in the state, five in New York City. The governor is also in favor of replacing tenure for school principals with "performance-based" three- to five-year contracts and threatened that "underperforming schools" that do not improve would be shut down.

Like most capitalist politicians, Democrat and Republican alike, Pataki views privately-run charter schools as a solution to the overcrowded and underfunded public schools throughout New York City. Pataki has recommended bypassing the statewide limit of 100 charter schools and opening an unlimited number of such schools in coming years.

Albany also proposes paying $3 billion for Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) expenses out of increased bridge and tunnel tolls and subway fares. The MTA has already stated it plans to increase subway and bus fares from $70 to $76 dollars for monthly passes, and from $21 to $24 dollars for weekly passes. Express bus one-way fares will go from $4 to $5. Commuter rail fares will also increase by an average of 5 percent. An article in the October 27 *Daily News* cited MTA chair Peter Kalikow saying that transit fare hikes could be as frequent as every two years and that the base fare, currently $2 per ride, would go up every four years. MTA officials announced plans to cut service, close 160 token booths, and run fewer buses in December.

The proposed state budget includes imposing a higher excise tax on wine, extending a tax on clothing and shoes under $110 that was set to expire May 31, and raising fees for motor vehicle registration and use of state campgrounds. All these taxes overwhelmingly affect working people.

At the same time, the governor has proposed lowering taxes on those with incomes between $150,000 and $500,000, as well as those making over half a million. He claims that these tax breaks—which add up to $190 million—would "encourage economic growth."

CALENDAR

Documentary Film Showing on Case of Cuban Five 'Mission Against Terror'

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Sat., Feb. 5, 7 p.m. Festival Center 1640 Columbia Rd., NW (near Metro, Columbia Hgts. Stop). (202) 544–3389 ext. 14.

MILWAUKEE, WI
Tues., Feb. 8, 7 p.m. Donation: $5–10. Central United Methodist Church 25th St. & Wisconsin Ave. (414) 273–1040 ext. 12.

Wed., Feb. 9, 7 p.m. Donation: $5–$10 UWM Union E. Wisconsin Room 2200 E. Kenwood. (414) 273–1040 ext. 12.

CHICAGO, IL
Thurs., Feb. 10, 11:30 a.m. Rafael Cintron-Ortiz Cultural Center UIC, 750 S Halsted.

Thur., Feb. 10, 7 p.m. Puerto Rican Cultural Center 2739-41 W. Division.

Fri., Feb. 11, 7 p.m. DePaul University Schmitt Academic Center #154 2320 N Kenmore (near Fullerton stop, red line) (773) 376–7521, (773) 878–0166.

DETROIT, MI
Sat., Feb. 12. Details to be announced. (313) 516–8004.

MINNEAPOLIS, MN
Sun., Feb. 13, 7 p.m. Donation: $5. McKnight Early Childhood Theater 4240 4th Ave. S. (612) 624–1512.

Solidarity Forum with Venezuela

NEW YORK

Stop U.S. attacks on Venezuela! Venezuela speaks for itself! A solidarity forum with Fermin Toro Jimenez, permanent representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to United Nations. Fri., Feb. 11, program, 7:00 p.m. Martin Luther King Auditorium 1199/SEIU Building 310 West 43rd. street (917) 887-8710 (bet. 8th and 9th Ave., Times Square subway stop).

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

The Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement and the Fight against Racism Today Speakers: Julian Santana, Young Socialist; Betsy Stone, Socialist Workers Party, participant in the fight to end Jim Crow segregation. Fri., Feb. 11. Dinner, 6:30 p.m., program, 7:30 p.m. Donation requested. *4229 S. Central Ave. (323) 233-9372.*

FLORIDA

Tampa

Palestine: The Elections and the Liberation Struggle Today Fri., Feb. 11, 7:30 p.m. Donation: $4. *La Place Shopping Center, 1441 E. Fletcher Ave. at 15th St. (2nd Fl., entrance in rear). (813) 910–8507.*

ILLINOIS

Chicago

The Struggle for Land in Venezuela; Help Build a Delegation from Chicago to the World Youth Festival Speakers: Omar Sierra, Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle; Argiris Malapanis, *Militant* editor. Sat., Feb. 12, 7:30 p.m. *3557 S. Archer Ave. (773) 890–1190.*

IOWA

Des Moines

The Legacy of Thomas Sankara and the Revolution in Burkina Faso 1983–1987 Speaker: Mary Martin, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Feb. 11. Dinner, 6:30 p.m., Program, 7:30 p.m. Donation: $5 program; $5 dinner. *3707 Douglas Ave. (515) 255–1707.*

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia

Grand Opening of the New Militant Labor Forum and Socialist Workers Campaign Hall Speaker: John Studer. Sat., Feb. 5. Open house, noon to 6 p.m. Reception and forum, 7:30 p.m. Donation: $5. *188 W. Wyoming Ave. (215) 455–2682.*

LETTERS

Garden of Eden picket

The Garden of Eden grocery chain opened a new store on Broadway near 106th Street in Manhattan in December. Half a dozen members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1500 have been leafleting outside asking people not to shop at the nonunion store. The leaflet reads: "The New Garden of Eden is attempting to lower the standard of living in the West Side community by: not providing workers with union scale wages; not providing affordable health insurance; subjecting workers to poor working conditions through fierce management tactics." The leaflet calls for a boycott of Garden of Eden. See photo of some of the unionists.

Robin Mace
New York, New York

Robin Mace

Unionists leaflet at Garden of Eden January 15

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I am a young Black man at the super max federal penitentiary at Florence, Colorado. I'm writing to request issues of the *Militant* newspaper. Please add my name to your mailing list. I look forward and hope to receive them in the mail soon. I have been locked up 21 years. The *Militant* surely would come in handy.

A prisoner
Florence, Colorado

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The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

THE MILITANT

King of Nepal dissolves gov't, seizes power

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

King Gyanendra dissolved the government of Nepal February 1 and announced he would assume absolute power. This is the second time in three years that the monarch has dismissed the prime minister and imposed dictatorial rule in this country of 25 million located between China and India.

The king said he would return the country to parliamentary rule "within the next three years." The following day he formed a new cabinet, comprised largely of monarchists.

The inability of successive administrations in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital, to put down a guerrilla war waged against the government is the immediate cause of the crisis. Since 1996, Maoist forces have been waging a guerrilla struggle in which thousands have been killed. The king's action grew out of the political crisis the Nepalese rulers face as a result of their military stalemate with the armed groups resisting their rule and other government opponents.

Gyanendra also declared a state of emergency. According to an Associated Press account of a palace statement, the king also "suspended several provisions of the constitution, including freedom of the press, speech and expression, peaceful assembly, the right to privacy, and the right against preventive detention."

Guerrilla leader Prachanda announced a three-day general strike to protest the king's actions.

The king commands the 78,000-member Royal Nepalese Army, which has nearly doubled in size over the last two years as the result of U.S. military aid. The monarch said he would give greater powers to his military.

"Troops and armed police patrolled the streets and surrounded the palace and other key sites," reported Agence France-Presse. Other media reports indicate soldiers have surrounded the residence of Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba and that a number of other top officials of political parties have been arrested.

AP Photo/Binod Joshi

Nepalese soldiers patrol street near royal palace in Kathmandu February 1. That day, the king dismissed Nepal's government and declared a state of emergency.

King claims to be impartial arbiter

Gyanendra announced over state-run television that he was removing Deuba and the cabinet because "innocent children were found massacred and the government could not achieve any important and effective results." Presenting himself as an impartial arbiter ruling "in the larger interests of the people," the king accused the parliamentary parties of "indulging in factional fighting" and failing to hold promised elections.

It is far from certain that the monarch will be as successful in putting down the guerrilla forces as he was in swiftly dismissing the four-party coalition government that includes the bourgeois Congress Party and the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), known as the UML. "The government's control in much of the country has been reduced to district capitals, with no government presence to speak of in the terrain beyond," the *New York Times* reported February 1. As of last November, about 80 percent of Nepalese police stations had reportedly been abandoned across the country.

The previous ruler, King Birendra, had also been unable to defeat the guerrilla forces. Birendra was killed in a June 2001 palace massacre that took the lives of much of his royal family. He had ruled as an absolute monarch in Nepal until 1990 when a mass movement forced him to allow the creation of a parliament under a constitutional monarchy. Birendra ended a 30-year ban on political parties and a coalition government took office. The following year, the Congress Party won the first parliamentary elections held in 32 years.

Brutal conditions facing toilers

The introduction of political reforms, however, did not alter the brutal conditions under which working people lived in Nepal. About 80 percent of the population eked out a living as subsistence farmers at the time of the 1991 election. To this day, feudal relations exist in much of the countryside. In 2003 unemployment reached 47 percent in the country, the highest rate of joblessness in Asia.

A Hindu-based caste system remains in force in Nepal, with millions consigned to the lowest "untouchable" status that serves to justify their poverty and denial of rights.

In Pokhari Chauri, 40 miles from the capital, "5,000 villagers endure a serf's existence," the *New York Times* recently reported. "The nearest paved road, electricity and hospital are a three-hour, bone-jarring ride down an old dirt track. Most land is owned by upper-caste Brahmins. Natural springs are the only source of water. The vast majority of women give birth in their homes, some sacrificing their lives in the effort. There are no cars, no televisions and no flush toilets for dozens of miles."

Under these conditions, the UML—a party that followed Moscow's lead in the Stalin era—gained 40 percent of the vote, the largest bloc, in the 1994 parliamentary elections with its promises of land reform and support for greater democratic rights.

When the UML took office at the head of a coalition government, however, it pledged to uphold the 1991 constitution, including leaving capitalist property relations unhindered and upholding the continued authority of the monarchy. The party also promised to foster a "market economy." The following year, the UML—riven by factionalism—lost a parliamentary vote of no-confidence and the Congress Party returned to office.

The last parliamentary elections in Nepal took place in May 1999, with Congress receiving 37 percent of the vote and the UML 32 percent. The UML held the post of deputy prime minister at the time of King Gyanendra's dismissal of the cabinet.

Guerrillas follow legacy of Shining Path

In 1996 Maoist forces began their armed actions to bring down the government. Adopting a more "radical" stance than the UML toward the fight against the conditions working people face in the cities and countryside, the Maoists have reportedly grown to a force of about 10,000 to 15,000 guerrillas. The BBC estimates as many as 50,000 "militia" forces fight alongside them. The leaders of the Maoist forces share a common anti-working class political trajectory as the Shining Path sect in Peru. They reportedly conduct summary executions of opponents and often abduct children for "democratic people's education" camps.

In the last six months the guerrilla forces have carried out two successful blockades of the capital. In December 2004 transportation into and out of Kathmandu was paralyzed, as Maoists warned of "dire consequences" if drivers of cars or trucks attempted to use the roads, the BBC reported.

The regime in Kathmandu has responded by cracking down on its critics and carrying out a bloody campaign of repression in the countryside that has resulted in more than 10,000 deaths over the last decade. Reporters Without Borders, a French-based group that follows the status of press freedoms, said that in 2003, long before the royal takeover, more journalists had been arrested in Nepal than in any other country.

The ruling coalition had been divided over how to proceed after the Maoist forces allowed a January 13 deadline for cease-fire talks to pass. The UML, in particular, opposed the government's plan to call an election. "There is no way elections can be held," said UML leader Pradeep Nepal, according to Agence France-Presse. "The government has no presence in the countryside."

Lukewarm criticism from Washington

Government officials in Washington, London, and New Delhi all released statements critical of the king's actions as a "setback to the cause of democracy," as the Indian foreign ministry put it. Although Gyanendra's allies in New Delhi and in the imperialist centers have criticized the state of emergency, they have done little in response. The Indian government announced its withdrawal from a meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation scheduled for February 6–7 because of its "grave concern" about events in Nepal. The U.S. government has supplied the Nepalese rulers in Kathmandu with about $22 million in the last three years—much of it for military aid—and has given no sign that it will shut off funding.

In an effort to prevent the release of information about conditions under the state of emergency, the Nepalese monarch has cut off telephone and electronic communication from the capital.

Colorado Wal-Mart workers to vote on union

BY DANIELLE LONDON

CRAIG, Colorado—Workers at the Wal-Mart Tire and Lube Express shop in Loveland, Colorado, came one step closer in their fight for union representation when the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled January 28 that employees in the tire department may hold a union election.

Last November, nine of the 17 employees in the department signed union cards to petition the labor board for an election for representation by Local 7 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW).

After a fact-finding hearing in December, NLRB regional director Allan Benson ruled that the 17 workers at Tire and Lube Express function separately from other workers at the Wal-Mart store and therefore comprise an appropriate bargaining unit. An election is expected to be held in late February.

Spokespersons for the retail giant told the *Denver Post* that they will appeal the decision.

"With approximately 400 associates in the building, we feel that more than a handful of associates should be able to have a say on such an important matter," said Wal-Mart spokesperson Christi Gallagher. Associate is the term used by Wal-Mart to refer to its employees. Wal-Mart is the largest private sector employer in the world, with 1.4 million workers, and has long battled to keep unions out of its stores. The company has already held three anti-union employee meetings since the workers at the tire shop filed their petition, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported. "I'll tell you straight, I earn $8 an hour. I can't even afford their benefits," tire shop worker Alicia Sylvia told the *Rocky Mountain News* in December. "I work for a living, and you know what? I have my kids on Medicaid."

Union officials and supporters of the organizing effort at Tire and Lube Express said the NLRB decision is an important victory for the union. "It gives us a foot in the door," said UFCW spokesperson Dave Minshall.

For years the company has repeatedly attempted to block unionizing efforts by intimidating workers through firings of union supporters and threats to take away benefits if the workers unionized.

In 2000, after meat cutters at a Wal-Mart store in Jacksonville, Texas, won UFCW representation, the company retaliated by eliminating that job category company-wide and selling only pre-packaged meat in its stores. On another occasion, two years later, according to the *Rocky Mountain News*, the union cancelled a representation vote at a tire shop at a Wal-Mart store in Dubuque, Iowa. It charged the company had intimidated workers into changing their minds.

Workers have won union representation by the UFCW at two Wal-Mart stores in Quebec, Canada. The UFCW says applications for union recognition are pending at 12 Wal-Mart locations in Canada.

Wal-Mart reported a 3 percent rise in sales January 6. Net sales of retail giant in the five weeks ending Dec. 31 topped $38 billion, a 13 percent increase compared to a year ago.